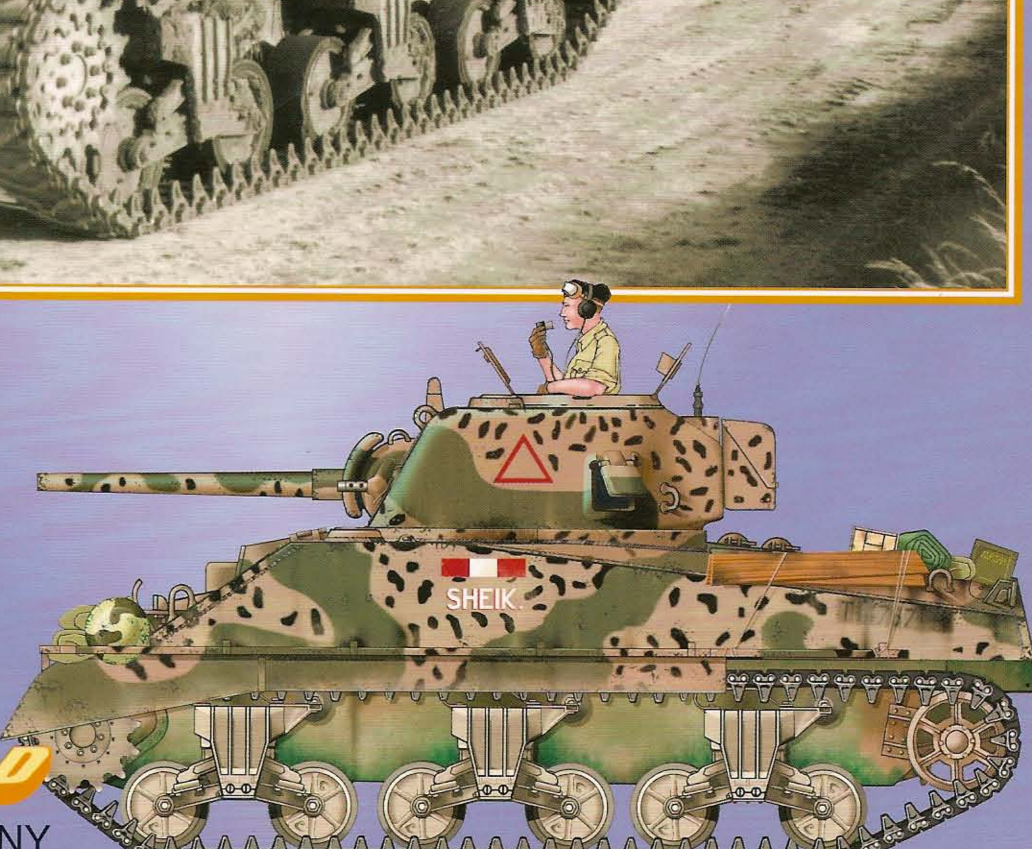
ARMOR AT WAR SERIES

7062

British Sherman Tanks

Dennis Oliver



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Text and Color Plates by Dennis Oliver

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Introduction

Arguably the most important tank of World War 2 – if only in terms of numbers produced – the American Medium M4 had by 1944 become the mainstay of the British Army's armored force.

In response to the defeat suffered by the British and Commonwealth forces at Tobruk in June 1942 President Roosevelt at once promised whatever help the United States might be able to give. The President himself suggested that the US Army's 2nd Armored Division be sent forthwith to North Africa. However, the impracticability of this plan became almost immediately apparent and the decision was made instead to strip an American armored division of its tanks and send them to 8th Army.

Despite the difficulties of moving this amount of hardware, and the loss of one of the freighters with all hands to a German U-Boat, some 252 Shermans were on hand by the start of Operation Lightfoot – the Second Battle of El Alamein – in October 1942. In line with their practice of naming tanks it was in fact the British, at the suggestion of Winston Churchill, who gave the tank the name by which it would become universally known – Sherman. The prefix General was thought to be unnecessary.

By the war's end the Sherman had served as medium tank, recovery vehicle and in a host of specialist roles. The basic designs had undergone innumerable minor modifications and the final production figures would exceed 40,000, the various models being built by 11 major manufacturers. This figure does not include the self-propelled artillery pieces or tank-destroyers which utilized the Sherman chassis.

The models used by the British Army are noted here in point form for convenience. It should be noted that other models were received for evaluation and trials but this list shows only those types used in combat. It should also be noted that technical details not relevant to British Army service have been omitted:

Sherman I (M4)

This model was in fact the third Sherman type to go into production. All vehicles were powered by a Wright 9 cylinder gasoline engine - these being available in some quantity at the time. The simple welded hull was designed for ease of production and the cast turret carried a 75mm M3 main gun and .30 cal machinegun. The front glacis plate was inclined at an angle of 60 degrees and featured box-like extensions which incorporated hatches for the driver and assistant driver – known in the British Army as the lap gunner. It is interesting to note that following British advise gained through combat experience, the radio was installed in the turret and not in the hull as had been the American practice up to that time. Other early features such as the suspension and gun mounts were the same as those described for the Sherman II and III as were the subsequent modifications. The OP (Observation Post) version, used for command and forward observation, had the main gun removed and replaced by a wooden dummy. The resulting space inside the turret was used for a map table and extra radio equipment. By the time of the Normandy landings 1st Tank Brigade of 79th Armoured Division had 50 gun tanks and 8 OP versions on hand and the independent 33rd Tank Brigade had 157 gun tanks and 8 OP's. Situation reports complied by 15th Army Group would suggest that no Sherman I's were used in Italy other than the IC and IB, however there is photographic evidence that the North Irish Horse of 21st Tank Brigade at least operated some.

Sherman IC

The 17pdr conversion based on the Sherman I, the "C" suffix identifying the armament. The hull remained unchanged from the Sherman I except that the lap gunner's position and machinegun were removed to allow for the stowage of extra ammunition. The hull machinegun aperture was then covered by a metal plate. Modifications to the turret to take the 17pdr gun are described under the Sherman VC.

Sherman Hybrid I (M4 with composite hull)

This version was achieved by mating the later M4A1 cast hull front to the M4 welded hull rear, hence it's British designation "Hybrid". The cast front was the later type with revised front contours and larger hull hatches set at an angle. The rear hull was the welded type seen on all M4's, the two parts being welded together. A version of this hull is shown in the illustrations. It is interesting to note that the M4 Hybrid was the only late production model to retain the hull appliqué armor as it was also the only model to retain the dry stowage arrangement for its 75mm ammunition. These models can be seen in use in France shortly after D-Day and may even have been in service at that time.

Sherman Hybrid IC

The 17pdr armed version of the Sherman Hybrid I, the "C" suffix identifying the armament. Modifications to the hull and turret are as for the Sherman VC.

Sherman IB (M4 105)

Based on the later Sherman I hull which featured a new, 47 degree glacis plate this version was fitted with the 105mm Howitzer mounted in an M52 gun mount which also contained a coaxial .30 cal machinegun. The turret had a later type vision cupola for the commander and an oval hatch over the loader's position. These tanks were used in Italy with great success originally attached to each squadron HQ and used in the close-support role. Deliveries began in September 1944 and by war's end 15th Army Group had 169 on strength.

Sherman II (M4A1)

Easily distinguished by its one-piece, cast hull this model was the first received by the British and accounted for the majority of Sherman types used at El Alamein. Early production vehicles featured the M3 bogies as used on the Grant/Lee tanks, a three piece, bolted transmission cover and the M34 gun mount. At least one tank, and possibly others, featured the shorter M2 75mm gun with counterweight at the end of the barrel and had the main gun sight housed in an armored rotor on the turret top. Whether these tanks had the two, fixed hull machineguns seen on the very first models is not certain. As a matter of interest the first Sherman received by the British – a very early M4A1 christened "Michael"- is today on display at the Tank Museum, Bovington. It retains the armored rotor and twin machineguns but at some time the M2 gun was replaced by a later type and the suspension now features pressed-steel road wheels. This tank in its original configuration is shown in the photograph section. In France in June 1944, 4th Armoured Brigade had 157 gun tanks and 8 OP versions, 8th Armoured Brigade had 76 DD tanks based on Sherman II models and 1st Tank Brigade had 27. In Italy a handful soldiered on until May 1945 with 6th Armoured Division, the independent 7th Armoured Brigade and even the Churchill equipped 21st Tank Brigade. Many where converted to specialist roles such as Fascine carriers. By the time production of the M4A1 ceased in January 1944 many modifications had been made to the original configuration with a major redesign of the hull to incorporate wet ammunition stowage. This type is discussed further under the Sherman IIA.

Sherman IIA (M4A1 76mm)

This version featured a 76mm gun mounted in a completely redesigned T23 turret. A vision cupola was provided for the commander with a gun ring hatch over the loader's position. The resulting increase in weight often necessitated the addition of end connectors to the tracks. The hull was the later cast type with wet ammunition stowage, revised front contours and larger hull hatches which were set at an angle. The principle of wet stowage worked by having the ammunition racks surrounded by a jacket containing a mixture of Ethylene Glycol and water. In the event of a shell fragment penetrating the bin the liquid would, in theory at least, extinguish any flame before it could ignite the ammunition. The whole system however was rendered useless by the practice of keeping extra ammunition lying about the turret. The range and armor penetration of the 76mm gun were considerably greater than those of the standard 75mm weapon. These were used by the British Army in Italy, the 17pdr armed Fireflies filling this role in Northern Europe. Deliveries began in late 1944 and by April 1945 a total of 538 were on hand with formations. This model is shown and discussed further in the illustrations.

Sherman III

Together with the Sherman II this type made up the force of some 252 Sherman tanks used at El Alamein. The welded hull was similar in appearance to the Sherman I, the most obvious differences being the engine access doors and rear hull and exhaust systems. The Sherman III was powered by twin General Motors diesel engines and indeed was often referred to in early British reports as simply "Sherman, diesel", the Sherman II being called "Sherman, petrol". These diesel-engined Shermans were popular with the troops and the diary of 4th Armoured Brigade notes with dismay that on leaving Italy they left their Sherman III's behind. Early types as used at El Alamein featured the M3 bogies, a three-piece, bolted transmission cover and the M34 gun mount. Before the North African campaign was over later design features had begun to appear – a cast transmission cover replaced the bolted type and the M4 Vertical Volute Suspension (VVS) bogies - which featured a trailing arm and a track support skid over the bogie - replaced the M3. During production the direct vision slots in front of the two hull positions were removed and replaced with fixed periscopes. It should be remembered however, that these features were introduced gradually and the earlier features could be seen on some tanks, particularly in the Mediterranean, until the war's end in May 1945.

In numbers received they were second only to the Sherman V with 5,033 being delivered. From the invasion of Sicily until the end of the war in Italy the Sherman III was the mainstay of the British and Commonwealth armored units, a total of 1239 being on hand in April 1945.

For the Normandy landings 8th Armoured Brigade had 95 gun tanks, 8 OP versions and 9 Armored Recovery Vehicles (ARV) on hand, 27th Armoured Brigade was equipped throughout, except for their Fireflies, with Sherman III models. The Sherman III was also used as the basis of a Duplex Drive (DD) conversion and one of these is shown in the illustrations. A Beach Armored Recovery Vehicle (BARV) built as a requirement for the D-Day landings was based on the Sherman III hull and suspension. In Italy a number of Sherman III models were converted to Armored Personnel Carriers and known as Sherman Kangaroos. These conversions were carried out between October 1944 and April 1945 with 75 vehicles in total being thus converted. The turret and armament were removed and a wireless set installed in the hull. Provision was made to carry ten passengers and a crew of two.

Sherman IV

Although it is believed that the M4A3 models received were never used operationally a table compiled by 1 Armored Replacement Group of 15th Army Group shows 33 Sherman IV received "ex Units and Formations" between 11 May 1944 and 2 May 1945. No explanation is provided however as to which formations these tanks came from. Nor do they appear to have been issued to another unit. However, the implications of the "ex Units and Formations" statement are obvious and the model is included here on the strength of that. The M4A3 was externally very similar to the M4A2 but was powered by a Ford 8-cylinder, 500hp gasoline engine.

Sherman V

By far the most numerous Sherman type in service with the British Army – 7,155 vehicles being supplied – the M4A4 was outwardly similar to the M4. The hull was some 6 inches longer however, the extra length being required to house the massive Chrysler 5-line engine. A modified suspension was also needed and the number of track shoes was increased from 79 to 83. Early models had the M34 gun mount but this was replaced by the M34A1 and it is this version which is most often seen in photographs. The early type, three piece transmission cover was retained on all vehicles. Sherman V models were utilized for Armored Recovery and Duplex Drive conversions. The Sherman Crab, a mine clearing vehicle which used a flail made up of a rotating drum and attached lengths of chain, was based on the Sherman V. Two versions were produced - the Crab I and Crab II. They were essentially similar but the Crab II was equipped with a contouring device to better negotiate irregularities in the ground.

Sherman VC

The most powerfully armed and effective of all the Sherman variants were those models mounting the British 17pdr gun and referred to as Fireflies. The suffix "pdr" as applied to British and Commonwealth artillery pieces can be translated as "pounder" and refers to the weight, in pounds, of the projectile. Conversions to mount the larger gun in place of the 75mm were carried out, in order of numbers converted, on Sherman V, Sherman Hybrid I and Sherman I models. It has been previously allowed that conversions were carried out on other models, most notably the M4A1 and M4A2, however it is now generally accepted that this is incorrect. That some models of Sherman tank in use with the British Army were not converted – although unfortunately not which models - is confirmed by an official letter of August 1944 which stated that "not all 75mm Shermans are capable of mounting the 17pdr gun."

In order to accomplish the conversion it was necessary to mount the gun on its side and it was also adapted for left hand loading. An armored extension had to be fixed to the turret rear to hold the wireless that had been displaced by the breech of the main gun - which now filled almost the whole turret. This armored box also acted as a counterweight. As the loader's exit was now obstructed by the gun it was necessary to cut a second hatch in the turret roof. To allow for maximum stowage space of the 17pdr ammunition the lap gunner's position and machinegun where removed and the aperture covered with a metal plate. The gun's potency was further increased by the use of Armor-Piercing, Discarding Sabot (APDS) shot, which left the barrel at nearly 4000 feet per second and was capable of penetrating 213mm of armor at 1000 meters. In the lead up to D-Day an attempt was made to allocate at least one Firefly per troop and the Sherman brigades, as well as the Cromwell equipped 22nd Armoured Brigade, had somewhere close to that number. As more conversions became available the percentage of 17pdr armed tanks increased until some regiments were able to restrict their 75mm tanks to squadron HQ as a support troop. In Italy the Firefly was not in use until late in 1944, the September Situation report showing 20 Sherman "M4 17pdr" being readied for issue to units and a further 79 expected from Britain. By April 1945 both Sherman IC and VC models were with armored units.

An interesting final note is that these tanks were referred to officially as either Sherman 17pdr or Sherman VC or IC, the letter C being the designation for the 17pdr armament. It is not certain when the name Firefly came into general use and other vehicles, notably the M10, were also referred to as "Firefly" at Troop level.

Other Sherman variants existed – particularly the specialist vehicles converted by units in Italy – but are unfortunately beyond the scope of this book. Hopefully they will be covered in a future volume.

All Sherman tanks received in Britain underwent modifications seen as necessary for the efficiency and comfort of British tank crews. The most obvious of these included the fitting of a stowage bin – known as a blanket box - to the turret rear, the early types being similar to those seen on Crusaders. Shermans used in the Desert were fitted with sandshields, were necessary, and brackets and rails along the hull sides to hold a Sunshield. The latter was in fact a canvas covered metal frame used to disguise the tank, the name being intentionally misleading. British radios were also fitted. As a matter of interest the first Sherman II models received were adapted to carry 6 extra rounds for the 75 mm gun bringing its capacity up to 96.

Camouflage and Markings

Although the subject of British Army Markings and the various camouflage schemes and patterns used throughout the war is a subject deserving of its own book, some mention should be made of it here.

The most basic marking applied to British tanks – and one that seems to have been used even when all others were neglected – where the signs which identified a squadron within a regiment. A system of hollow geometric shapes - a diamond for HQ, triangle for A Squadron, a square for B Squadron and a circle for C Squadron – was used. Regiments which contained a fourth, D Squadron used a rectangle of solid color. Within the brigade the seniority of the regiment was shown by the color used to depict the squadron signs. Red, yellow and blue were employed – for senior, second senior and junior regiment respectively. Troop numbers were supposed to be displayed in the center of the squadron sign but this was never universal and seems to become less frequent as the war progressed towards its end. As a matter of interest the color used by the Motor Battalion, which was in effect the fourth regiment within the brigade, was green. Armored Reconnaissance Regiments, which were not brigaded, used white. In practice these signs could be carried on the turret sides, the hull sides, the hull front, the blanket box and even the rear of the hull.

Officially all vehicles carried the Formation badge of their division or brigade and while this practice seems to have been adhered to in North-West Europe many tanks seen in North Africa and Italy did not carry any. Examples of both types of marking are shown in the illustrations.

Often carried adjacent to, or in combination with, the Formation badge was the Divisional Unit Serial number, also referred to as the Arm of Service (AoS) marking. This system, whereby each unit of a division was distinguish by a number, was originally established to further identify a tank to friendly units but at the same time be meaningless to the enemy. By the time 8th Army received the first Sherman tanks a system of bewildering variation had given way to a set of numbers that would be used, with minor variation, until war's end. There remained however two distinct numbering systems – one for the Mediterranean and Middle East and one for Britain and Northern Europe. While the complete system is far too large to be listed here we can limit ourselves to the numbers used to denote the Brigade HQ, the senior regiment, the second senior regiment and junior regiment within an armored Brigade. For Italy and the Middle East the numbers used were 71, 40, 86 and 67 respectively. For Britain and Northern Europe they were 50, 51, 52 and 53 - both theaters using a red square. It should be noted that these numbers were for use by armored brigades attached to divisions. The numbers and colors used by the independent brigades is unfortunately beyond the scope of this work although some examples are shown in the illustrations and described in the photo section were possible. There is photographic evidence however that independent brigades in Italy, at least 7th and 23rd Armoured Brigades used the divisional system. The numbers were carried on a rectangle the regulation size of which was 8½ inches wide by 9½ inches high. Many variations existed the most notable being those that combined the Formation badge and the Arm of Service square. Again, examples of these are shown in the illustrations.

All tanks were allocated a War Department (WD) number, also often referred to as a census number. This number, unlike the various unit markings, was retained for the life of the vehicle. For tanks and armored carriers this number began with the letter T. Another common marking was the Bridge Classification Number which indicated the weight class of the vehicle, in the case of Sherman tanks the number was 30. This most often took the form of a black number on a yellow circle although variations existed.

In June 1942 an Aerial Recognition marking was introduced which took the form of a roundel similar to the type used by the Royal Air Force. The maximum size was a diameter of 5ft 2ins but this could be reduced to fit an available surface – the proportions being retained. On Shermans the marking is most commonly seen on the rear hull deck and also on the turret roof. It should be noted that neither the proportions nor the colors used where those employed by the RAF but vivid shades of yellow, red and blue. In April 1944 this marking was superseded in all theaters by the familiar five-pointed star enclosed in a circle however in Italy it could still be seen long after that date.

When the first Sherman tanks reached the British Army in North Africa the official instructions for vehicle camouflage prescribed that tanks be painted in a base color, known as No 61 Light Stone in the Standard, before being issued to units. This color was also referred to as Desert Yellow and this is in fact a fairly accurate description, the resultant shade being a light sandy yellow. At that time any further application of a camouflage pattern was left to the discretion of the unit, usually brigade, Commander and many regiments could easily be identified by the camouflage scheme used on their tanks. The security implications of this are obvious and in October 1942 a General Order was issued that cancelled all previous instructions. Furthermore, standardized patterns of disruptive camouflage were to be applied to specific vehicle classes or types. A new base color, called Desert Pink Z.I., was authorized and the disruptive patterns were to be applied using Dark (Olive) Green. If Dark Green paint was not available Black, Very Dark Brown or Dark Slate were acceptable alternatives. Desert Pink was produced locally and has been described as a warm sandy pink.

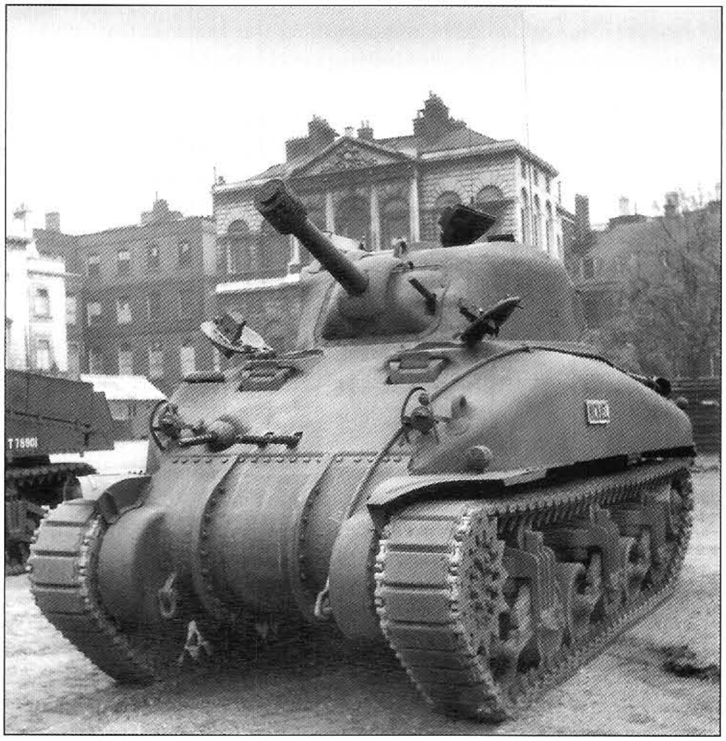
This Order remained in force, with minor amendments, until April 1943 when new instructions and designs were issued in anticipation of operations in Sicily and Italy. The base color was changed to Light Mud with Black or Dark Green disruptive patterns. Lend-lease vehicles supplied in US Army No. 9 Olive Drab were to receive a coat of disruptive camouflage using Light Mud. Patterns of Light Mud and a dark disruptive color can be seen on tanks in Italy well into 1944. This scheme was intended to be used by the whole of Middle East Command and there is no evidence for the sand and red camouflage scheme described variously as being in use in Egypt or Syria during late 1942 and early 1943.

In Britain the standard base color was referred to as Standard Camouflage Colour (SCC) 2 or Service Colour – described as a dark brown with a slight khaki tint. Black was approved as a disruptive pattern color. In April 1944 a new color, SCC 15 Olive Drab, was authorized. This eliminated the need to repaint US vehicles most of which were now left in their base coat of US Army Olive Drab. In August 1944 the use of disruptive patterns was discontinued for all vehicles.

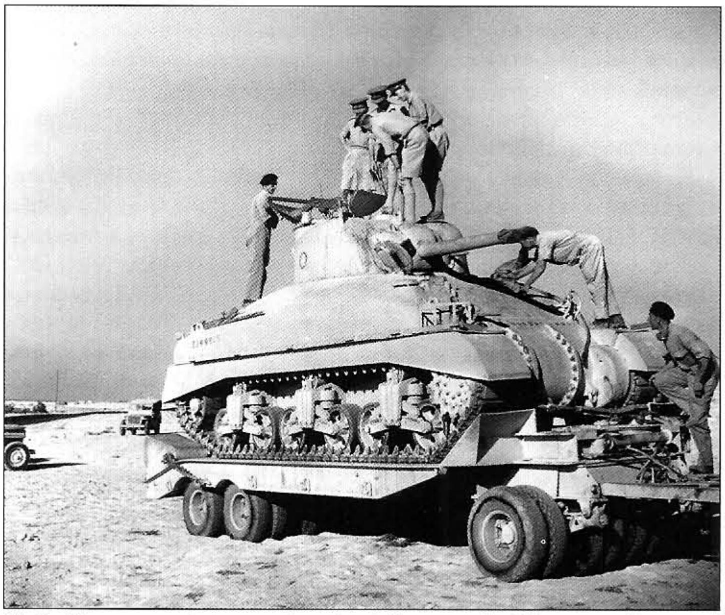
Variations on the officially authorized patterns of camouflage did exist and some of these are shown in the illustrations.

The foregoing explanation of camouflage colors and patterns is of necessity brief and general in its terms. For those readers wishing to explore this fascinating area in more detail I could do no better than to recommend the series of booklets published by Mike Starmer, each containing detailed explanations, mixing suggestions and color chips.

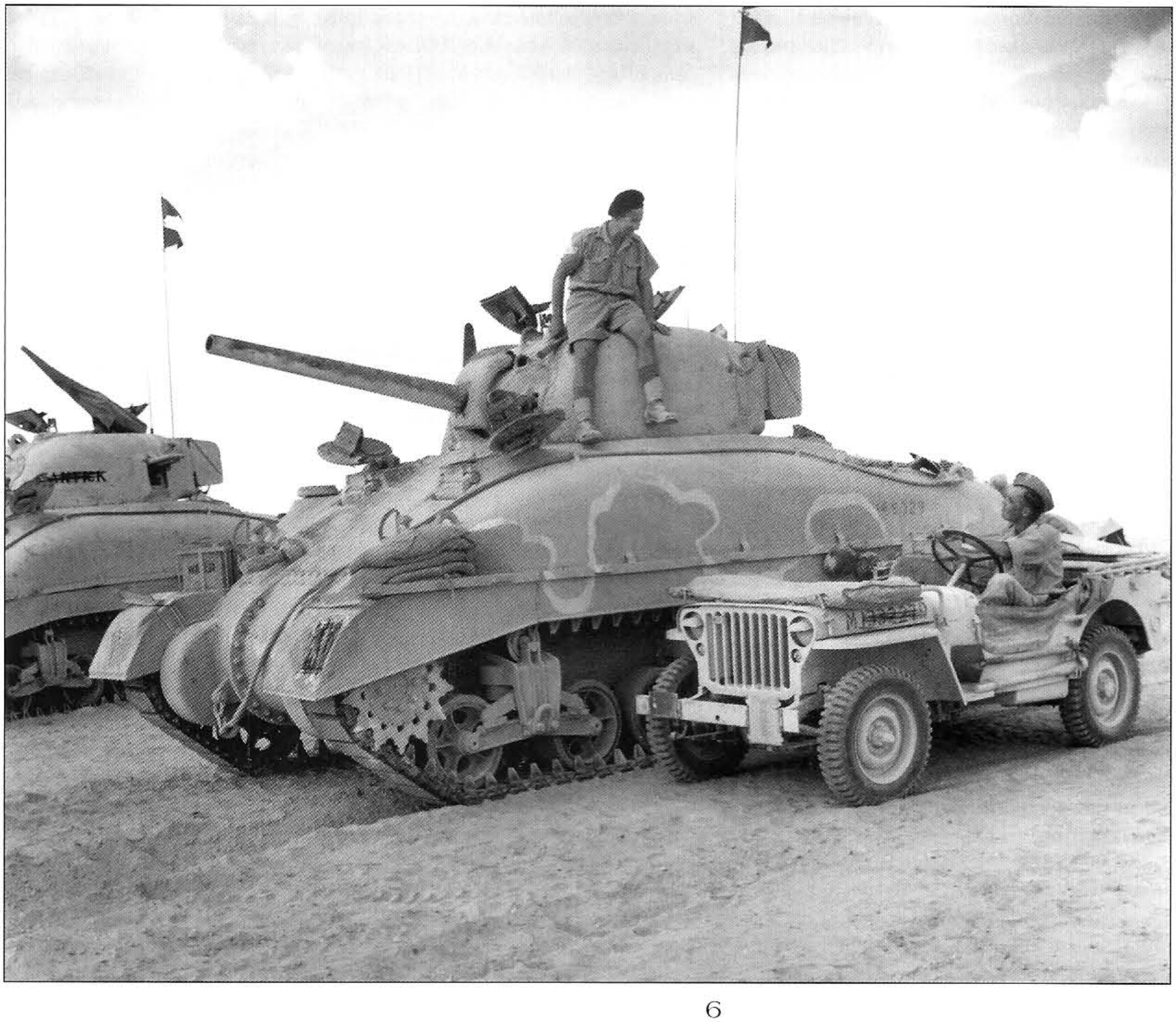
The author would like to express his thanks to Mike Starmer, Peter Brown, Mark Mackenzie, Ian Carter and the staff at the Imperial War Museum Photographic Archive, Greg Kelleher of The University of New England and Ian Paterson for their generous support and assistance. For anyone with an interest in the history of the British Army during the Second World War, particularly the 7th Armoured Division, I would recommend a visit to Ian Paterson's website at www.desertrats.history.btinternet.co.uk/index.htm.



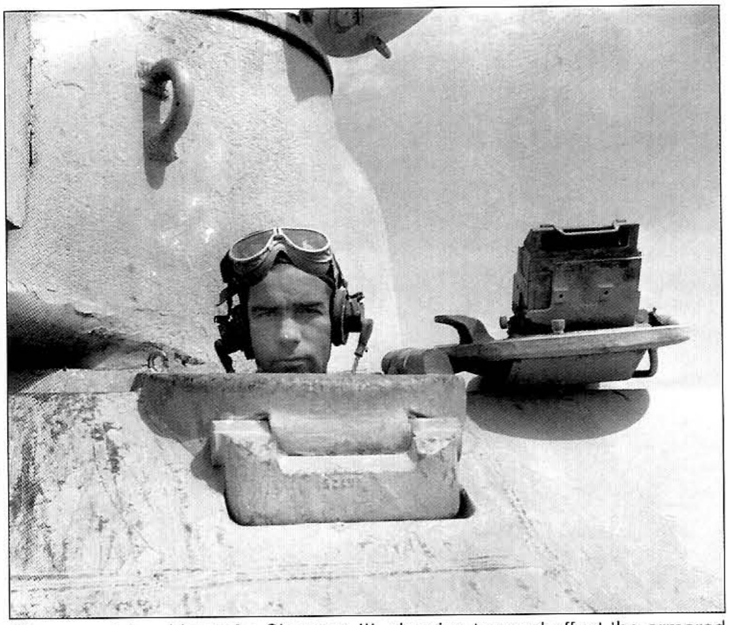
The first Sherman tank delivered to Britain, on display at Horseguards Parade in London. This tank is essentially the same as the Sherman II models which saw combat at El Alamein with the exception of the short M2 main gun with counterweight, the twin fixed, hull machineguns and the armored rotor sight on the turret roof. This tank can be seen today at the RAC Museum at Bovington. 8 May 1942. (IWM H19582)



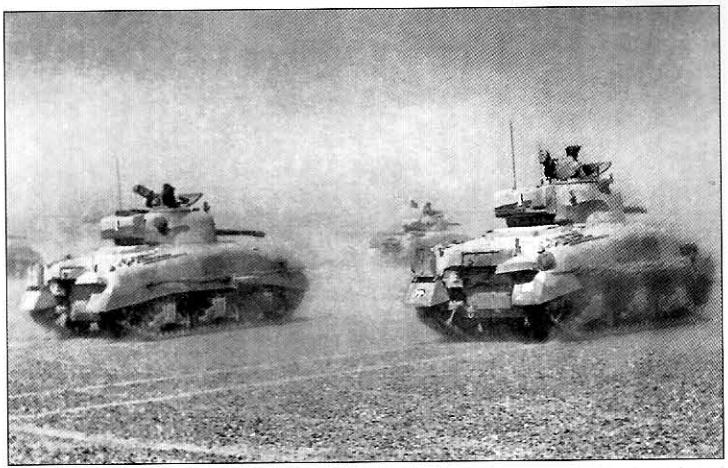
Staff officers examine a newly-arrived Sherman II sitting on a Scammell Pioneer tank transporter. The combined formation badge and Arm of Service (AoS) sign of 3rd The King's Own Hussars of 9th Armoured Brigade can just be seen on the driver's side sandshield. The rather small, red squadron sign is unusual as is the .30 cal MG at this time. If the date of this photo is correct then the vehicle would be painted in the then standard Light Stone 61. 15 September 1942. (IWM E16861)



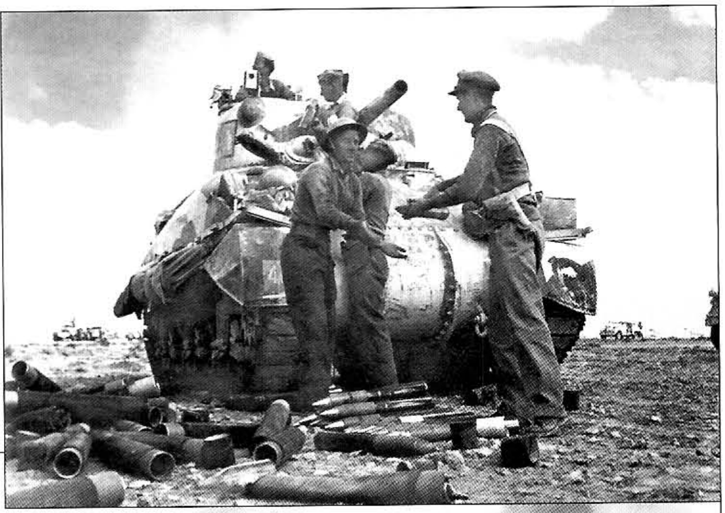
Sherman II of HQ 2nd Armoured Brigade. Previous works have described this paint scheme as the remnants of a guideline used by the Sappers as a first step in camouflaging the tank – a process interrupted by the El Alamein offensive. However, the presence of an almost identical scheme applied to a Crusader – the colors being reversed – and the date of the photo would seem to disprove this. In this author's opinion this is a camouflage scheme in its own right, the white line being an attempt to simulate a mirage. 10 October 1942. (IWM E17898).



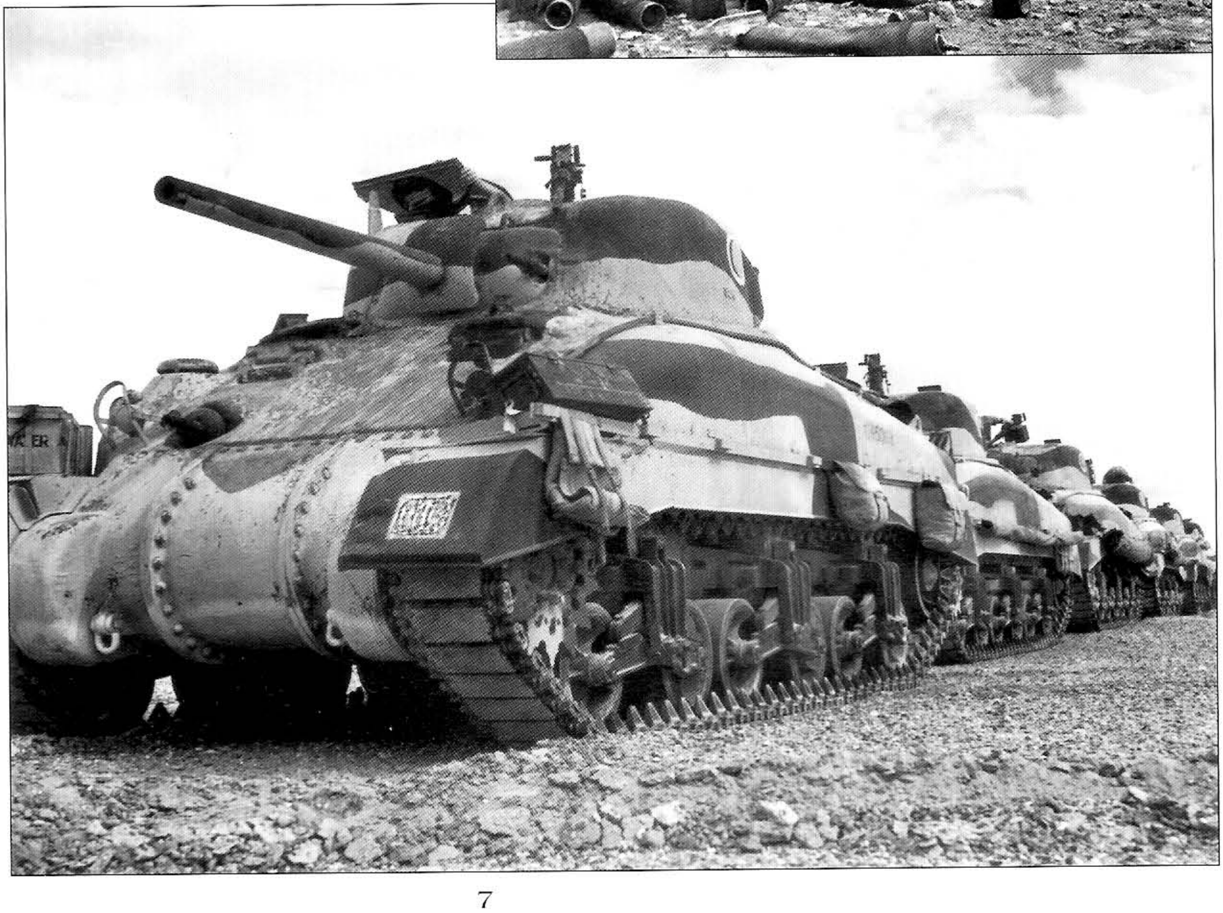
Close-up of the driver of a Sherman III, showing to good effect the armored cover of the direct vision slot and the hatch periscope. The manual approved method for mounting a Sherman was for all the crew to climb over the front glacis plate and the relative ease with which the British paint became worn and scuffed in this area is apparent. 13 October 1942. (IWM E17966)



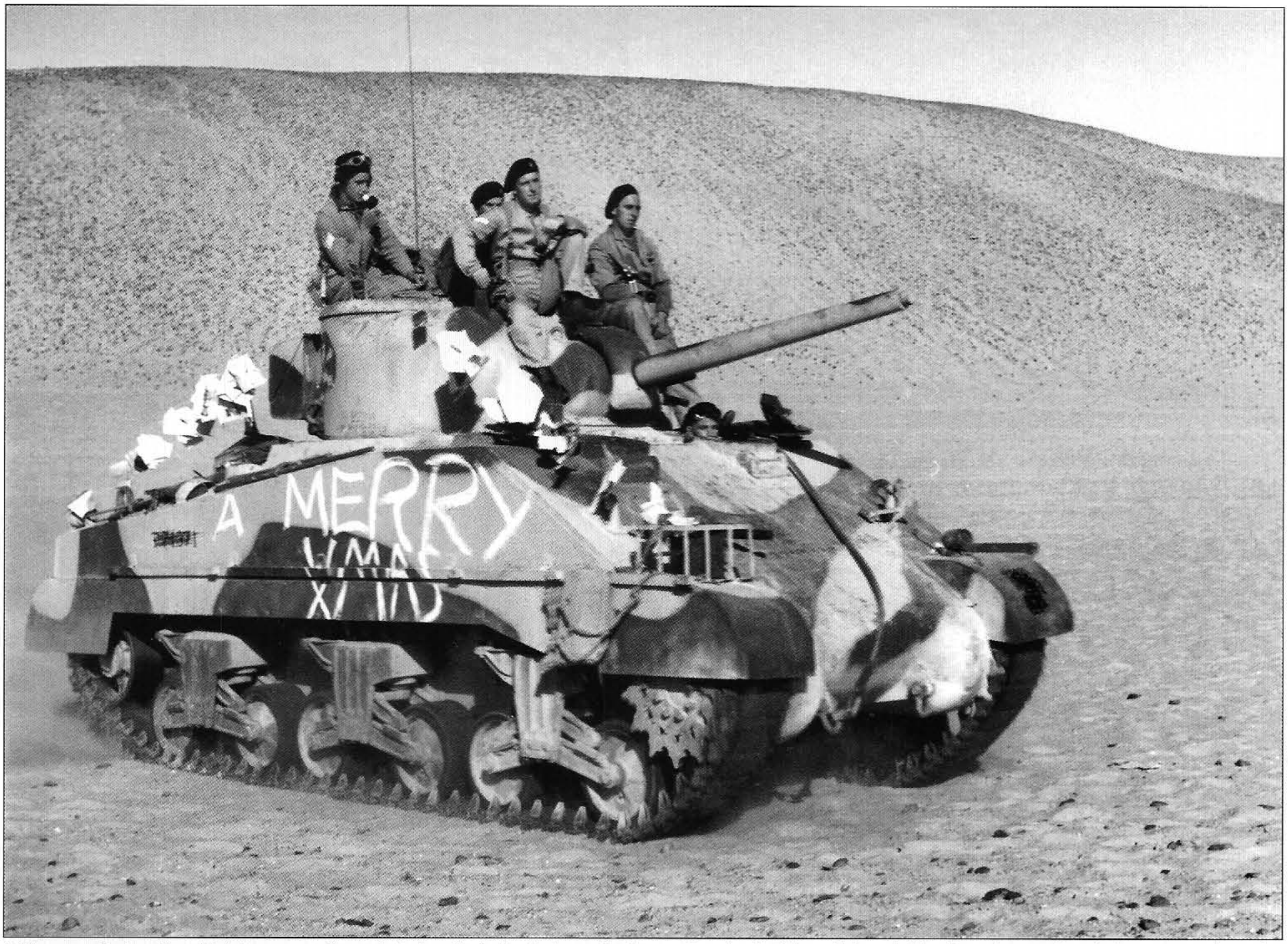
A rear view of Sherman II's of the 9th Lancers. The troop number is painted onto the blanket box and although it is most often depicted as yellow, it does appear to be lighter in photographs when it can be compared to the squadron sign and may in fact be white. Note that the black outline is carried right around the number and not restricted to the area of the shading as is usually shown. At this time C Squadron contained 1, 2, 4 and 8 Troops. October 1942. (IWM E18971)



The crew of a Sherman tank of The Queen's Bays (2nd Dragoon Guards) of 2nd Armoured Brigade, 1st Armoured Division, replenishing their stock of 75mm ammunition. The AoS sign of the senior regiment of an armored division can be seen just behind the trooper wearing the tin hat with the Charging Rhino formation badge of 1st Armoured Division behind the officer. 5 November 1942. (IWM E18994)



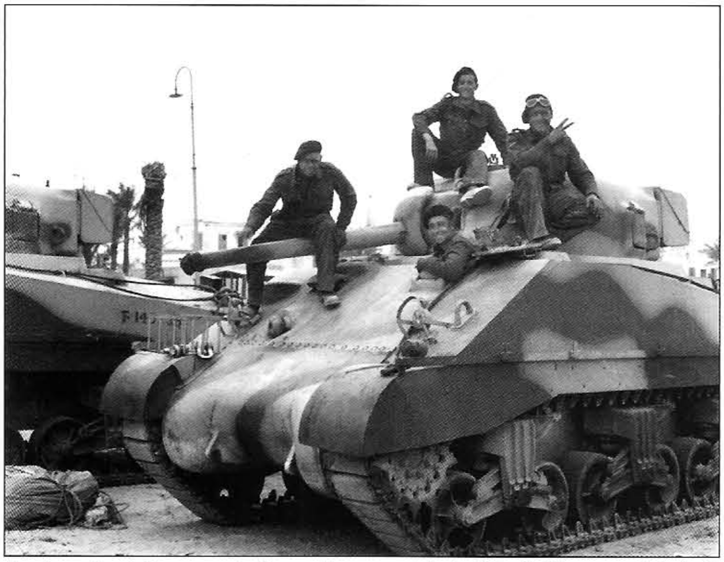
Previously identified as The Queen's Bays, these tanks are in fact from the 9th Queen's Royal Lancers and are lined up for the camera just prior to Operation Lightfoot, the Second Battle of El Alamein. Each shows a near text book application of the pattern of disruptive camouflage approved in early October 1942. White counter shading has been applied to the lower potion of the hull front but not to the underside of the main gun. The Lancer's distinctive C Squadron sign with drop-shading can be seen on the turret side. 24 October 1942. (IWM E18377)



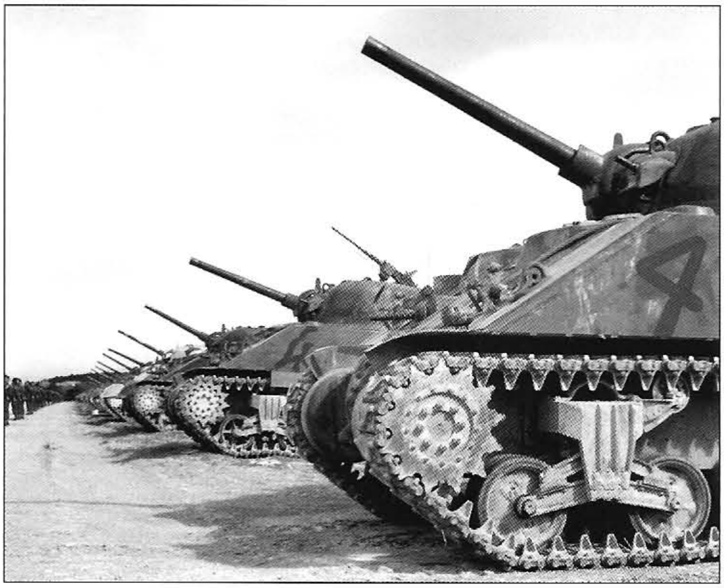
A Sherman tank with a Christmas greeting painted on its hull, photographed near Benghazi. This vehicle exhibits the mixture of early features such as the direct vision slots and M34 gun mount with later modifications such as the cast transmission cover and M4 bogies. The camouflage pattern is typical of that used by 2nd Armoured Brigade at this time. 26 December 1942. (IWM E20570)

Trainees receive instruction on the workings of the Sherman tank's engine at the Royal Armoured Corps School at Abbasi in Iran. 19 January 1943. (IWM E21382)

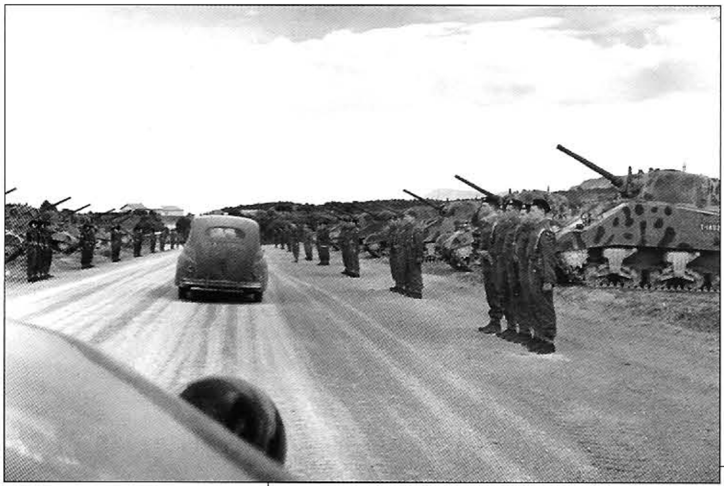
English, South African and New Zealand tank crews receive instruction on the Sherman tank by an American instructor at Dab el Haag training camp near Cairo. 24 February 1943. (IWM E22596)



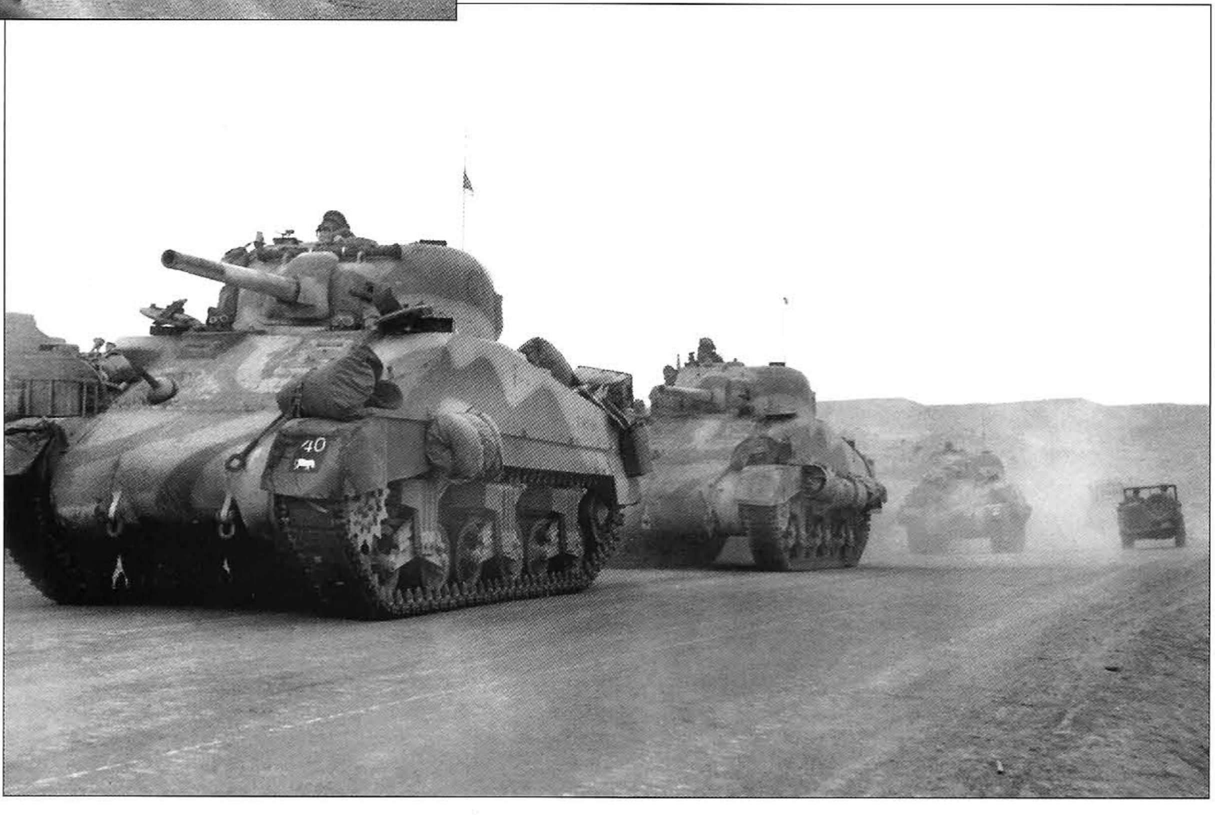
Newly-arrived Sherman tanks on the quayside in Tripoli. Compare this tank with those of the Bay's photographed in October 1942. The disruptive pattern is now applied with a soft edge and the contrast between its two colors is much lower. This pattern is identical to that shown in the photograph of the Bays at Gabes in April 1943. 15 March 1943. (IWM E22968)



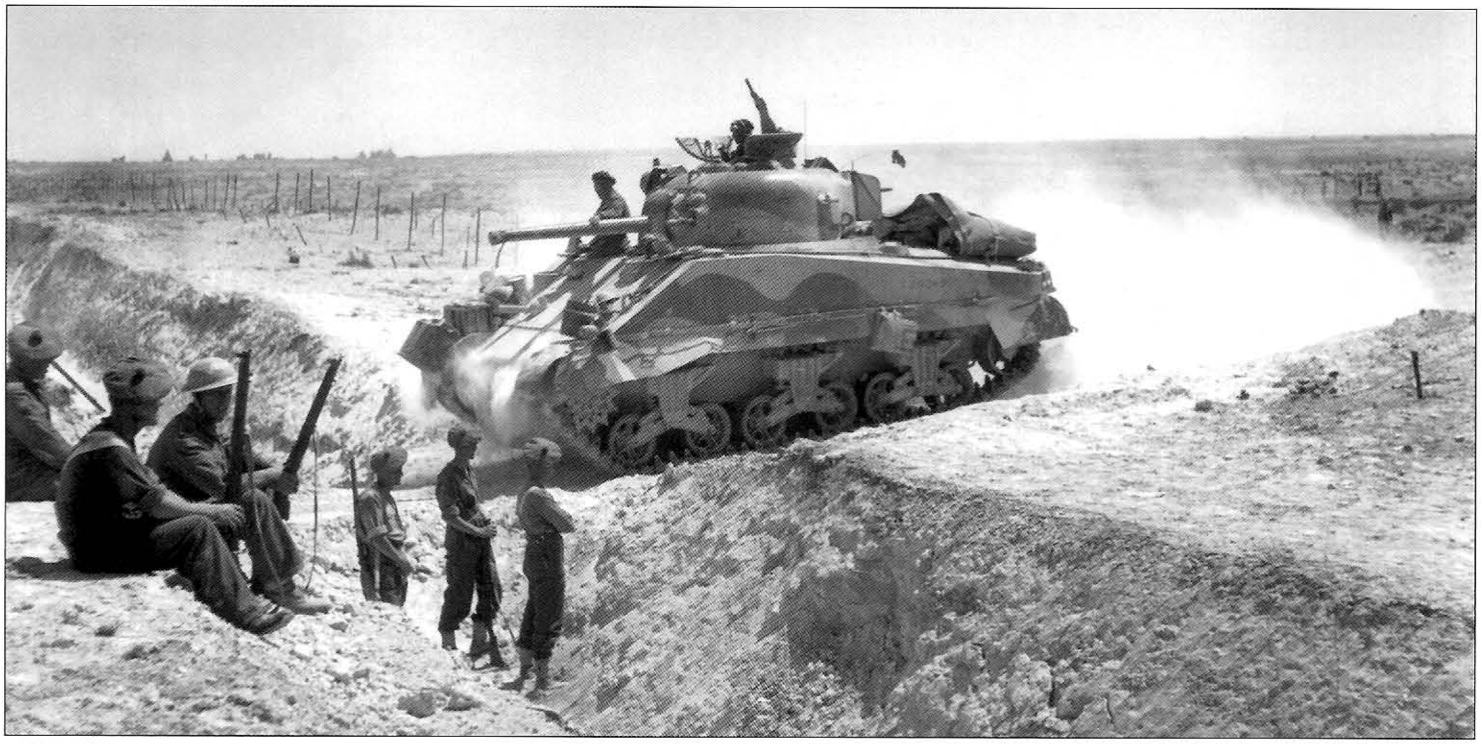
Shermans of 6th Armoured Division's 26th Armoured Brigade on parade during a visit by the Turkish Military Mission. These tanks are probably of A Squadron, 16th/5th Lancers and all seem to have been left in their US Army Olive Drab except the fourth vehicle which has been painted in a very light base color with a dark disruptive pattern – possibly Light Mud and Black. The unusual application of the troop numbers on the hulls is typical of the markings of 26th Armoured Brigade's tanks at this time. Also of note is the armored shield for the coaxial machinegun. 28 March 1943. (IWM NA1574)



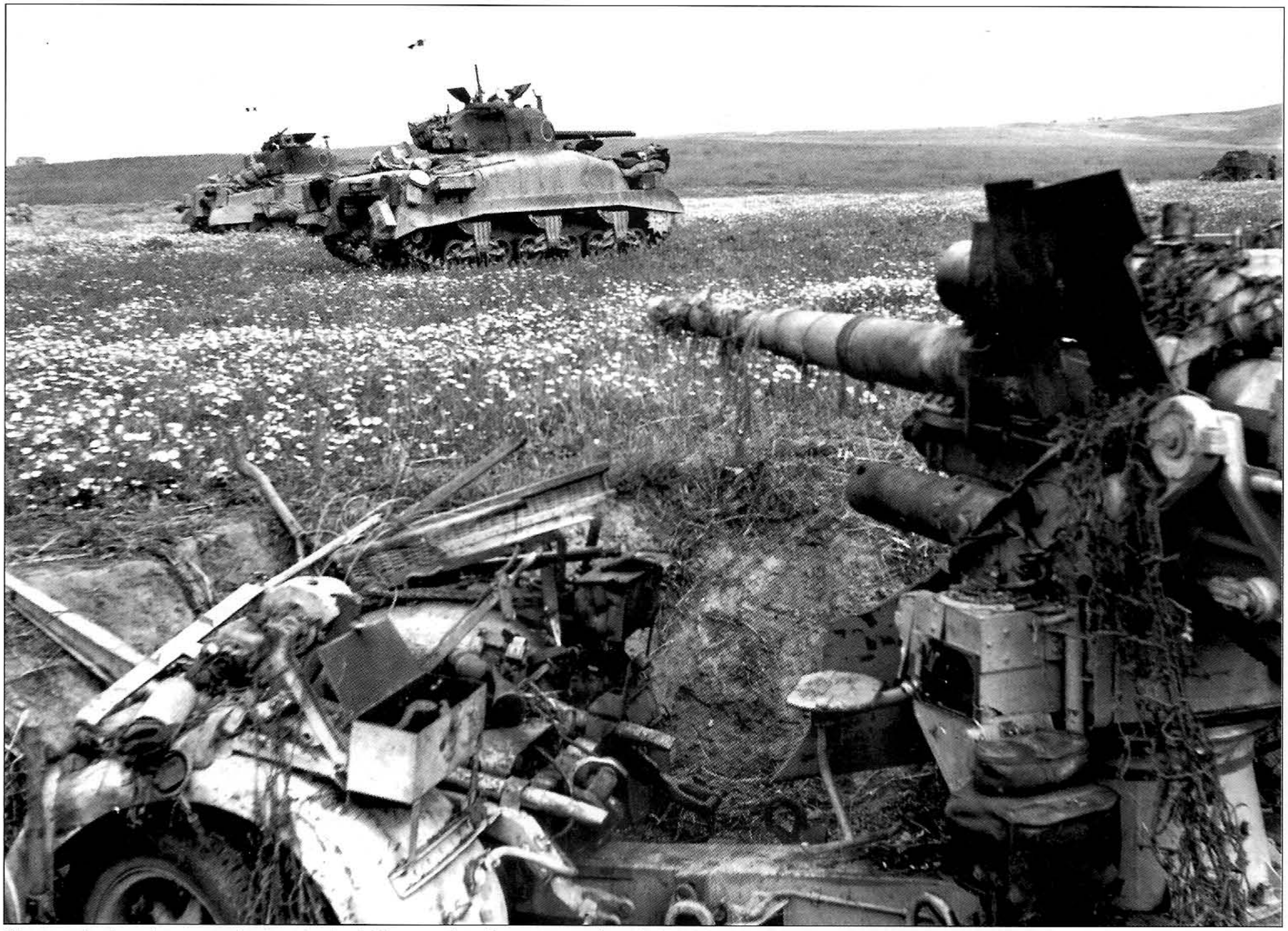
Following on from the previous photo these Sherman III's of 6th Armoured Division. The men's cap badges closely resemble those of the 2nd Lothians and Border Horse, the junior regiment of 26th Armoured Brigade and C Squadron signs are clearly visible. The unusual camouflage patterns are typical of 1st Armoured Division tanks at this time and are probably painted using Light Mud over US Olive Drab. Intriguingly the censor has removed a marking from the nearest tank just in front of the WD number. (IWM E23724)



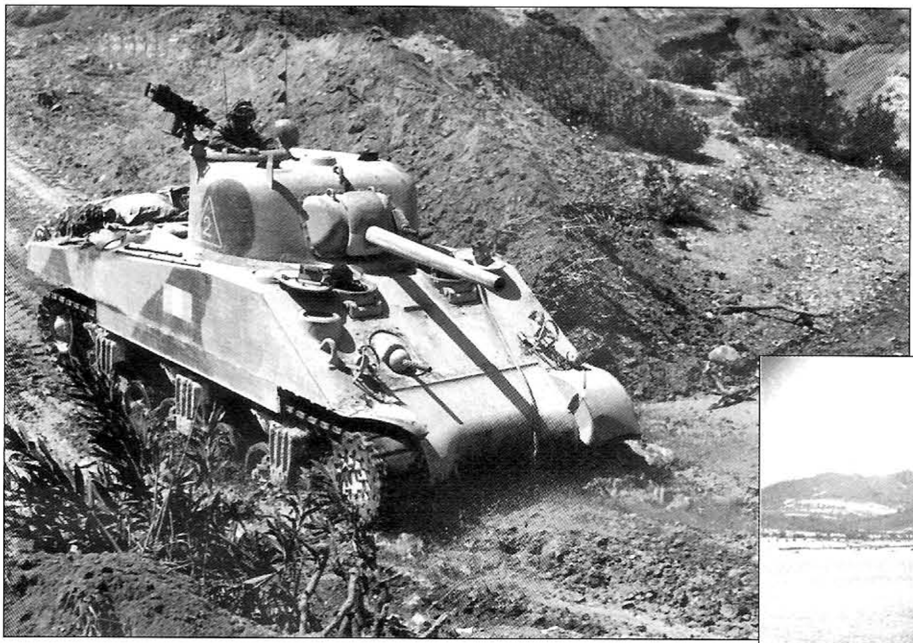
Sherman tanks of The Queen's Bays passing through the Gabes Gap during 8th Army's advance into Tunisia. The C Squadron sign in the red of the senior regiment is just visible on the turret side and the formation badge and AoS sign are now combined and on a single, very dark colored background. Note the stereoscopic range finder sitting on the turret front. 7 April 1943. (IWM NA1809)



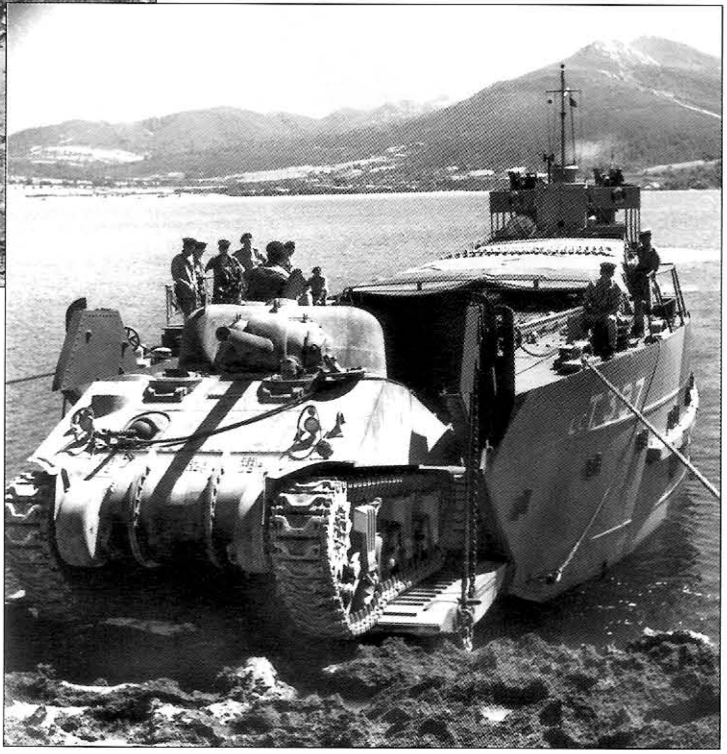
A Sherman III crosses an anti-tank ditch during the fighting around Gabes. This photo has in the past been identified as 4th County of London Yeomanry crossing the anti-tank ditch at Wadi Akarit, which they did just below Roumana Ridge. The presence of the Highlanders may indicate that this is so. 6-7 April 1943. (IWM NA1877)



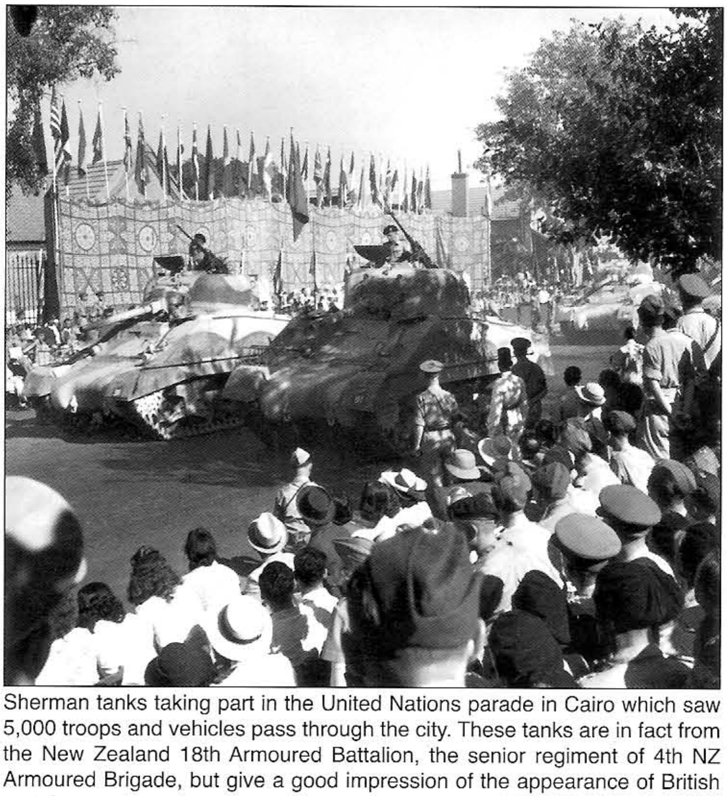
Sherman tanks advance past a knocked-out 88mm anti-tank gun somewhere in Tunisia. The only markings visible here are the yellow C squadron circles on the turret sides and the unusual, possibly red/white/blue, flags flown from the aerial of each tank. Noticeable is the lack of sunshield rails and blanket box - which may indicate newly issued tanks. Also unusual is the attachment to the vane sight. 23 April 1943. (IWM NA2324)



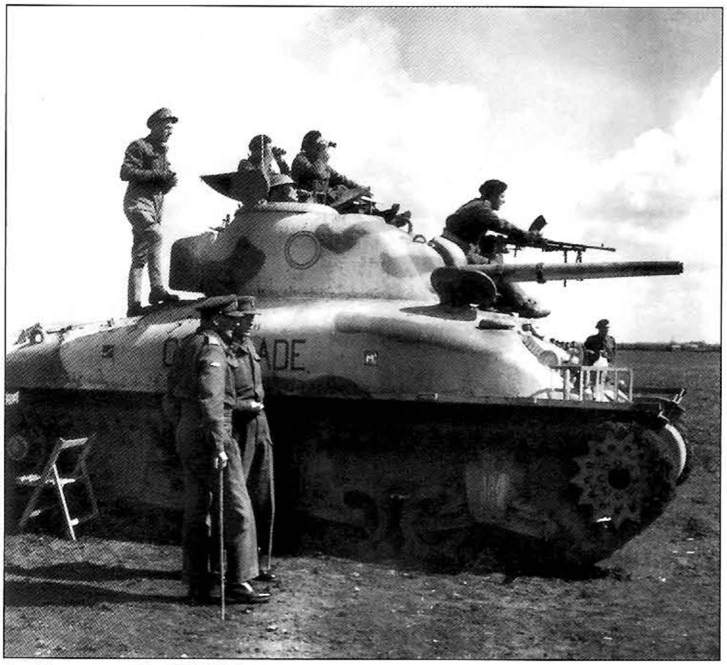
A Sherman III crossing a wadi in Tunisia. This tank is typical of the type seen in the later stages of the North African campaign. The diesel-engined Sherman III has now become the most commonly seen and features synonymous with the Western Desert, such as sandshields are either no longer needed or are not replaced when damaged. Although there are no markings that would enable the unit to be identified, the red/white/red recognition marking on the hull side is not often seen on 8th Army tanks and this Sherman may therefore belong to 6th Armoured Division. 22 April 1943. (IWM NA2359)



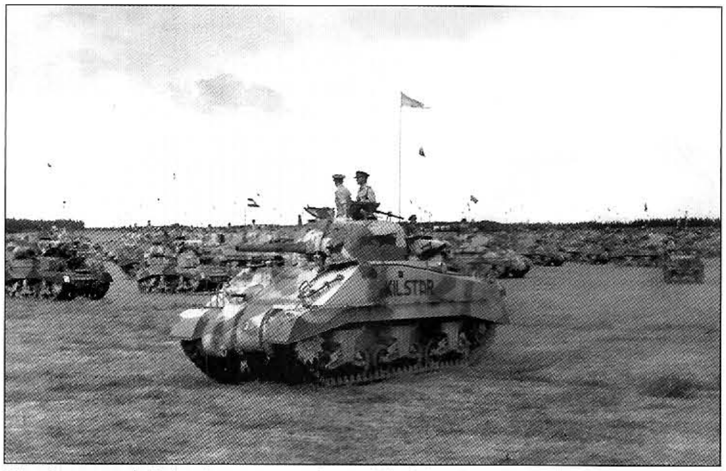
Preparations for the invasion of Sicily were underway as soon as the North African campaign was concluded. A Sherman III leaves a landing craft during an exercise on the North African coast. The only marking carried is the red/white/red recognition sign at the center of the transmission cover and, barely visible, on the hull side. 6 June 1943. (IWM NA3513)



Sherman tanks taking part in the United Nations parade in Cairo which saw 5,000 troops and vehicles pass through the city. These tanks are in fact from the New Zealand 18th Armoured Battalion, the senior regiment of 4th NZ Armoured Brigade, but give a good impression of the appearance of British and Commonwealth armor at the conclusion of the North African campaign. 14 June 1943. (IWM E25247)

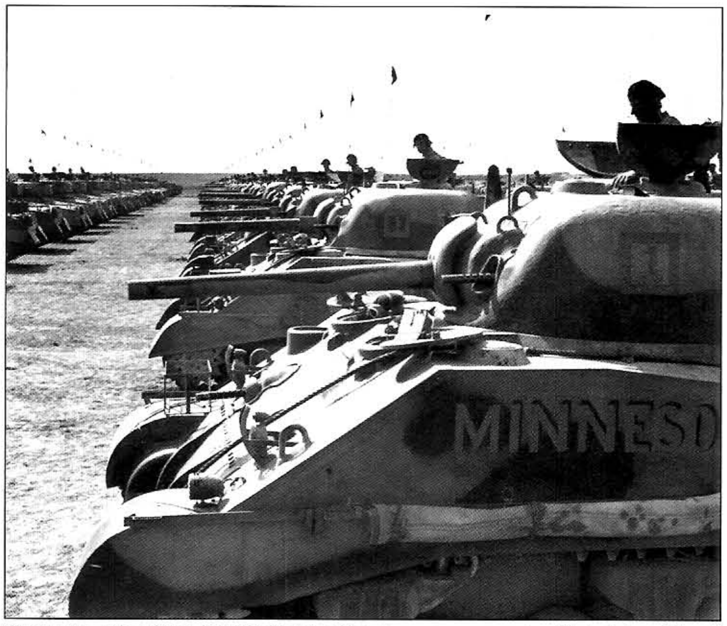


A Sherman II, CRICKLADE, of the Wiltshire Yeomanry watched by Lieutenant General W G Holmes, GOC 9th Army, at Aleppo in Syria. In late 1942 the regiments of 9th Armoured Brigade left North Africa to rest and refit in Syria and this tank is probably still wearing a Desert Pink and Dark Green camouflage scheme. The squadron sign has an unusual dark outline and the WD number, T 149466, was displayed on the hull above the name. 5 April 1943. (IWM E23451)

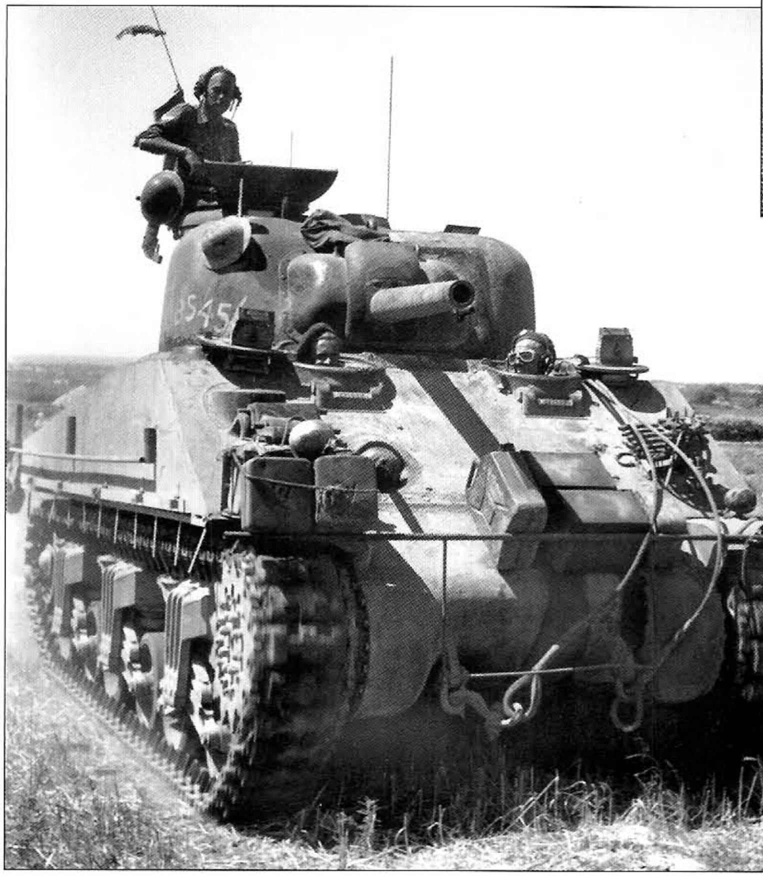


9th Armoured Brigade on parade at Hadeira in Palestine. General D F Anderson, GOC 3rd Corps, takes the salute from a Sherman III of Brigade HQ. Note the red/white/red pennant denoting a Corp Commander flown from the aerial at the front of the tank. The name KILSTAR is painted on the hull side, possibly in red, with the New Zealand silver fern badge just above and to the right of the letter L. On the transmission cover, below the driver's position, the composite formation badge and AoS sign of 9th Armoured Brigade with the number 71 denoting brigade HQ is painted. In the center of the transmission cover is painted 3A, the number in white with the letter in a darker shade. Behind and to the left are M3 Honeys of 1st Royal Horse Artillery. 30 October 1943. (IWM E26199)

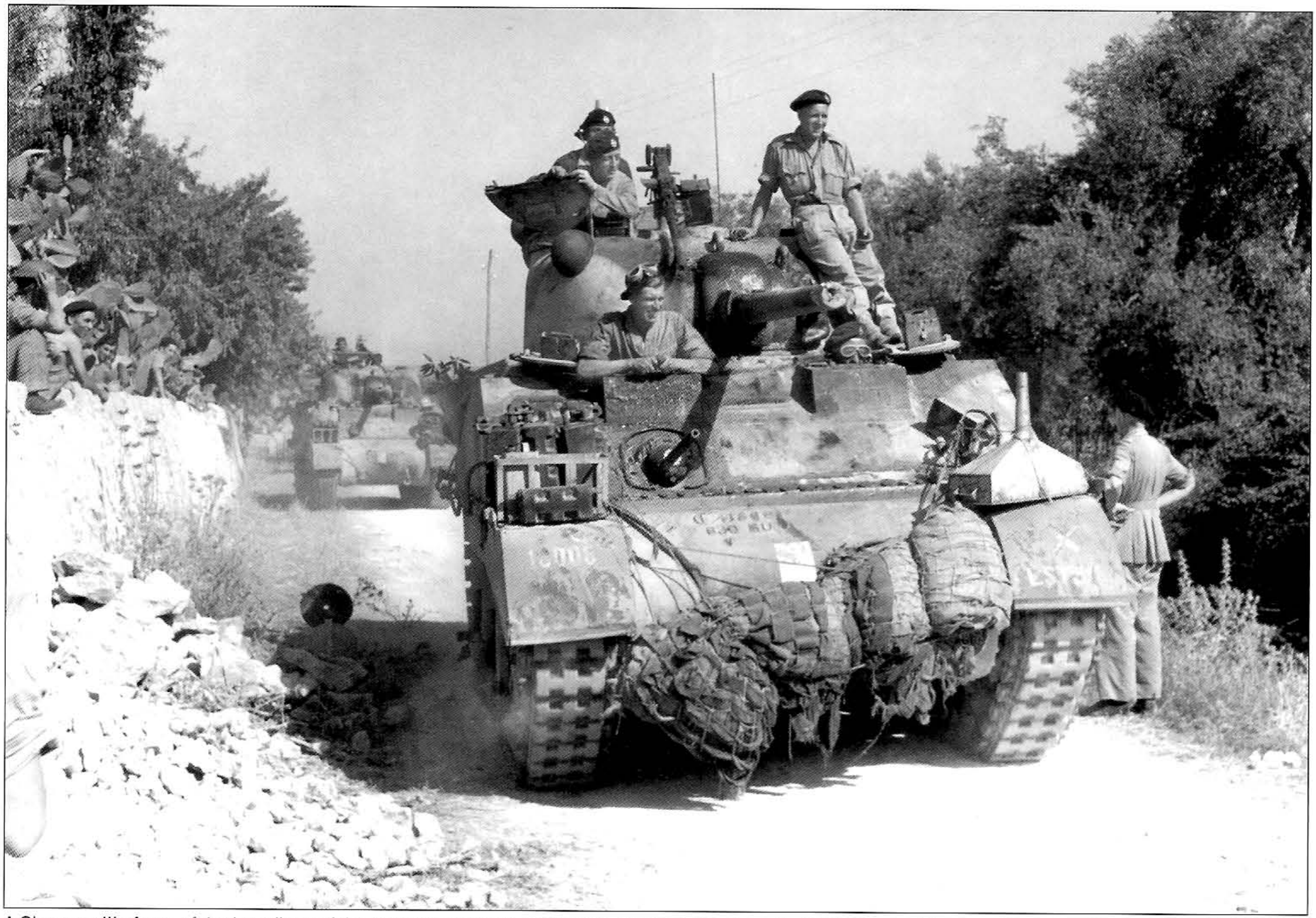
Sherman tanks of the 3rd The King's Own Hussars, 9th Armoured Brigade, parade before the commander of 3rd Corps, Lt General D F Anderson, at Hadeira in Palestine. The name ADAMANT is painted on the hull side in large, red letters. The formation badge of the 2nd New Zealand Division can be seen just above the M. The composite formation badge and AoS sign are just to the right of the driver's position and large squadron signs, enclosing a troop number, were carried by most – but not all – the regiment's tanks. At this time the authorized camouflage scheme of a base coat of Light Mud with a disruptive pattern of Black – or Dark Olive Green if Black was not available – was being used. October 1943. (IWM E26207)



Sherman III's of the Warwickshire Yeomanry on parade at Hadeira. The B Squadron sign enclosing the troop number is clearly visible on both tanks. The practice of naming tanks after states and cities of the United States was carried over from the Desert. Below the name MINNESOTA the censor has deleted the New Zealand Division's formation badge and another marking at the front of the hull which is unknown and does not seem to be carried by the other tanks. As this was the junior regiment of 9th Armoured Brigade the squadron sign and name would be painted in blue, albeit in an unusually light shade. 30 October 1943. (IWM E26201)



A Sherman III advances during the fighting on Sicily. The British armored force for the invasion was made up of 3rd County of London Yeomanry and 44th RTR of 4th Armoured Brigade and B Squadron, 46th RTR and 50th RTR of 23rd Armoured Brigade. This tank is devoid of any markings other than the landing ship number on the turret side. However, the driver's cap badge does seem to be that of the RTR and the curious metal frames are seen on other Shermans of 50th RTR. Note that the 2" bomb thrower is held in the MG mount behind the commander. 10 July 1943. (IWM NA4197)

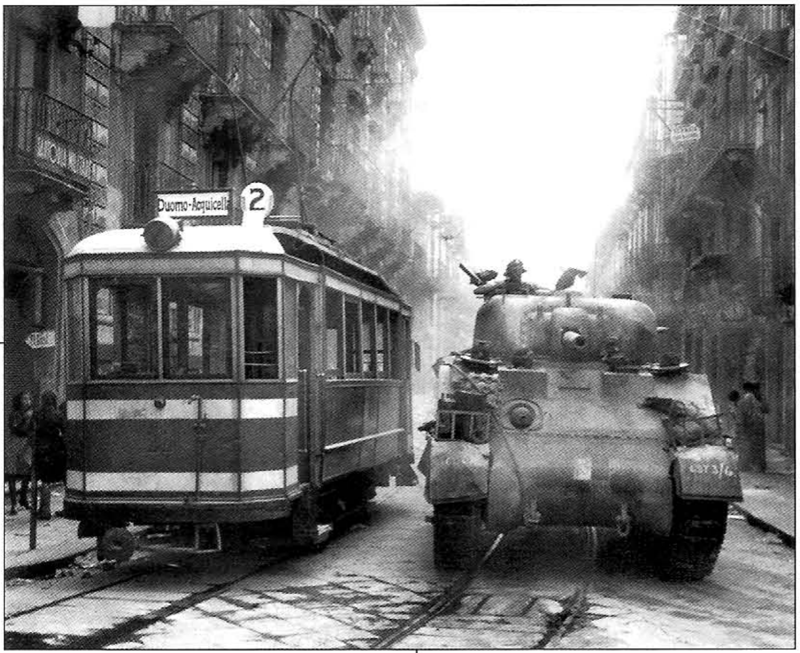


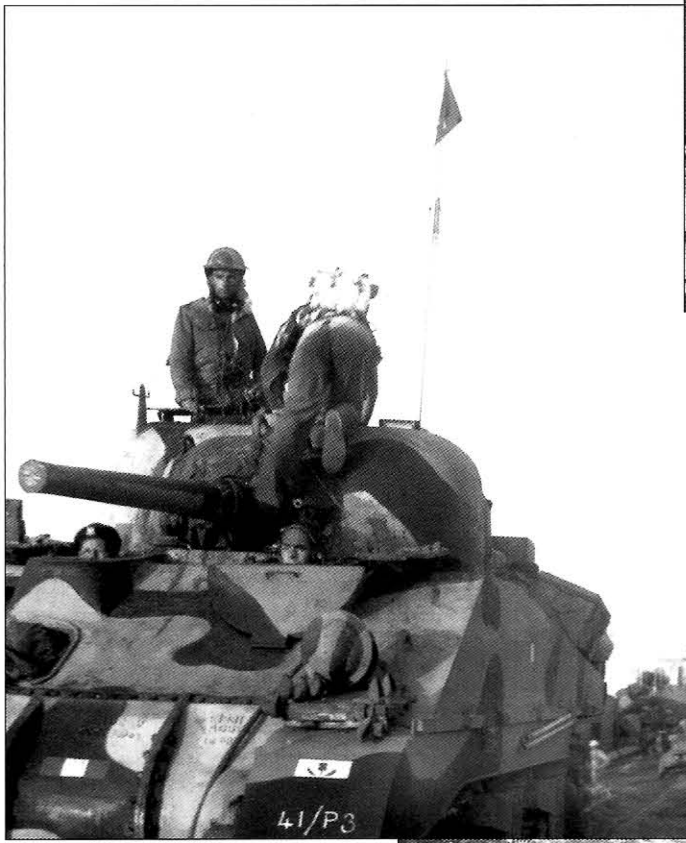
A Sherman III of one of the battalions of the Royal Tank Regiment moves down a typical road in Sicily. No markings can be seen other than the red/white/red recognition sign on hull front and sides. Shipping markings are also visible. 10 July 1943. (IWM NA4362)

Officers consult their maps by the side of a Sherman III. The colored shoulder strap slip-ons resemble those of 46th RTR and the tank commander's RTR cap badge is clearly visible. Note that part of the sand shield has been removed and welded to the rear hull a practice usually seen on tanks of 4th Armoured Brigade. 29-31 July 1943. (IWM NA5228)

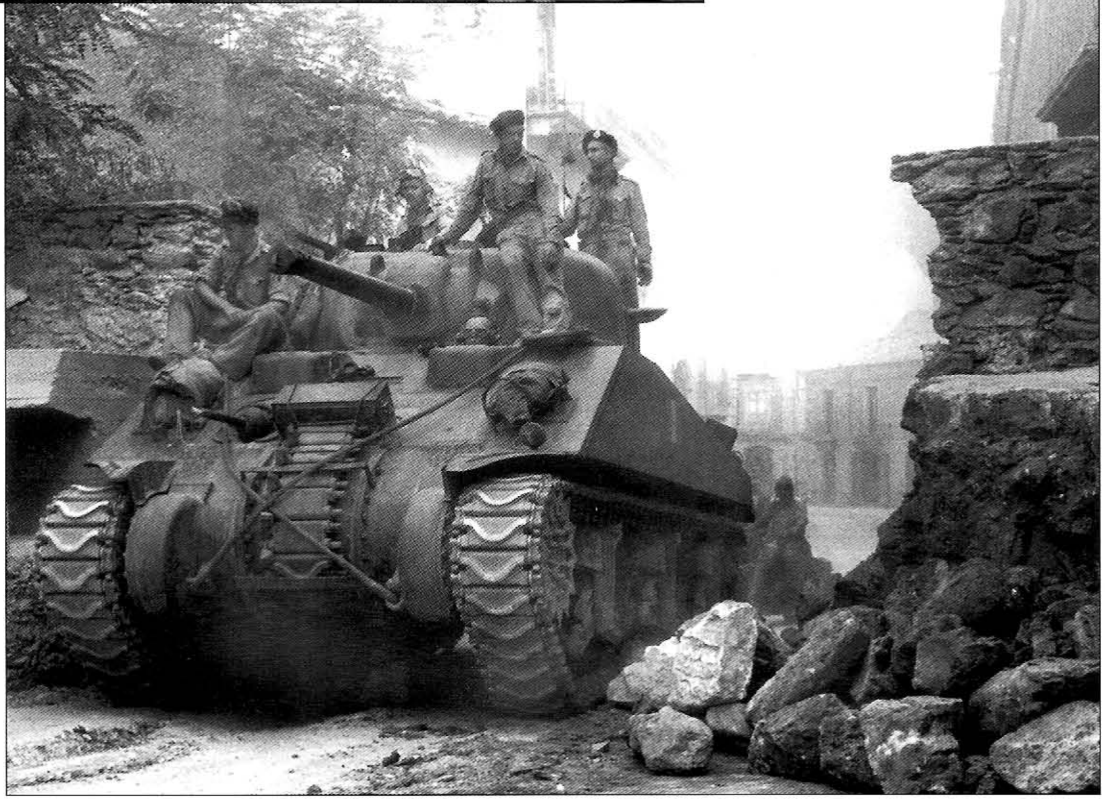
An atmospheric shot as a Sherman III of 50th RTR is silhouetted against the setting Sicilian sun. 1 August 1943. (IWM NA5424)

A Sherman III passes a tram in the Via Garibaldi during the entry into Catania. This tank shows markings typical of 44th RTR who did support 5th Division in the attack on the town. 5 August 1943. (IWM NA5558)

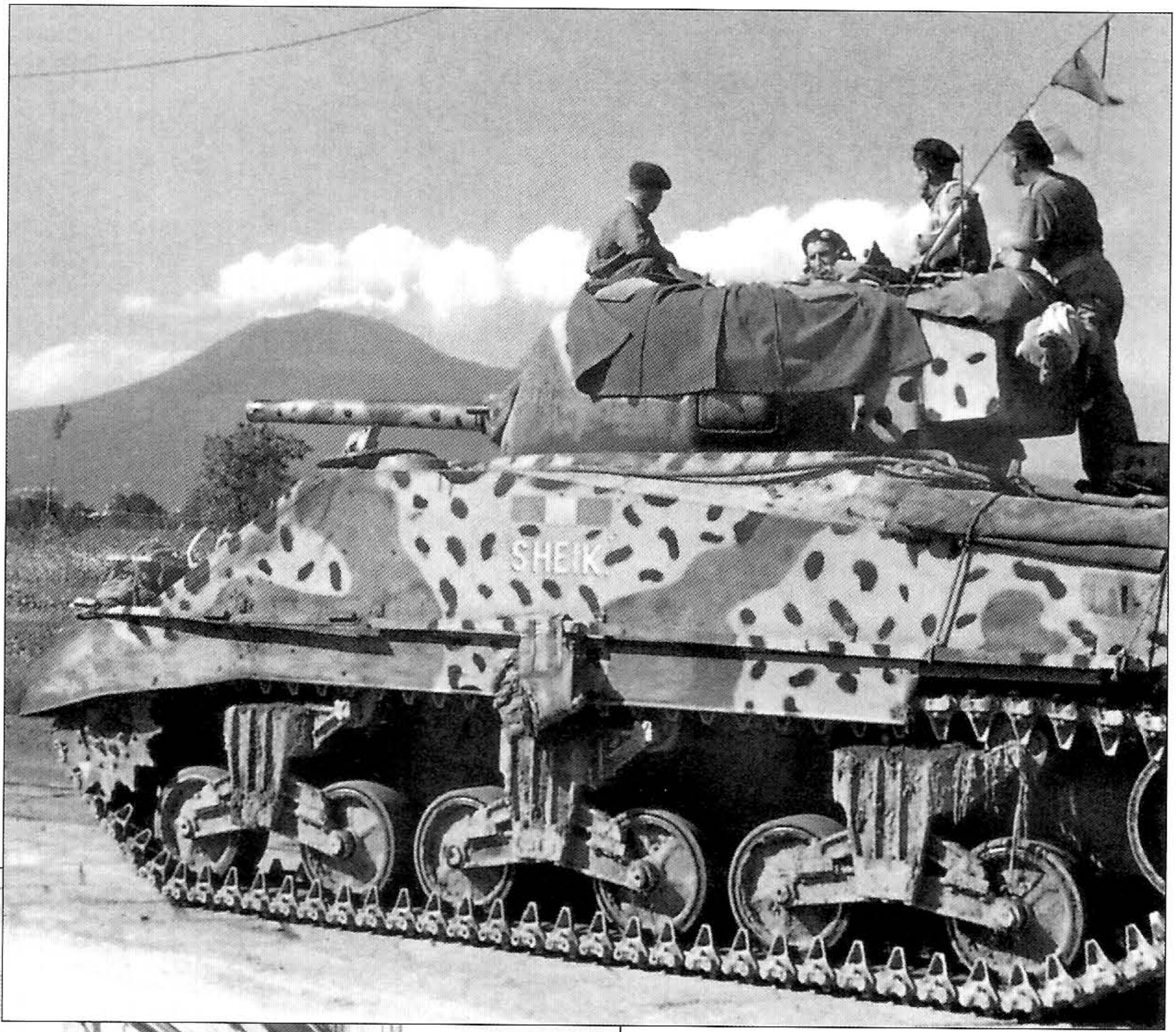




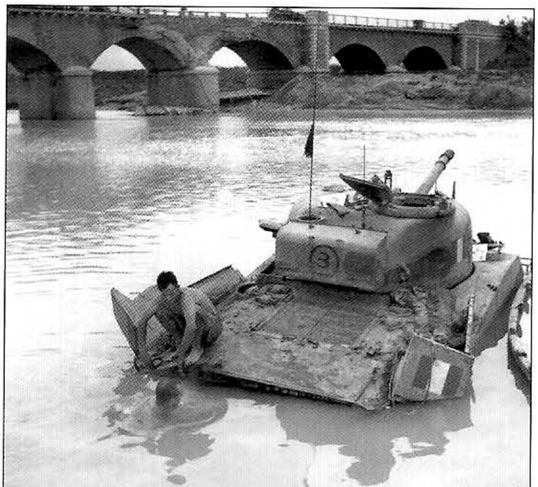
A Sherman III of The Royal Scots Greys (2nd Dragoons) comes ashore at Salerno, Italy. This tank is shown and discussed further in the illustrations. September 1943. (IWM NA6725)



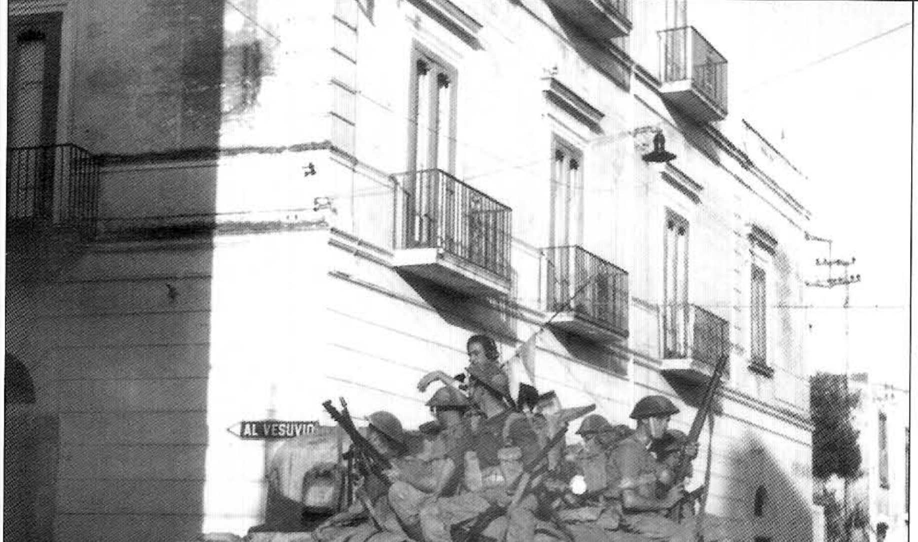
A Sherman tank passes through Nicastro. This vehicle seems to have been left in its original US Army Olive Drab. The officer standing behind the turret appears to be wearing the RTR cap badge but positive identification is not possible. 11 September 1943. (IWM NA6902)



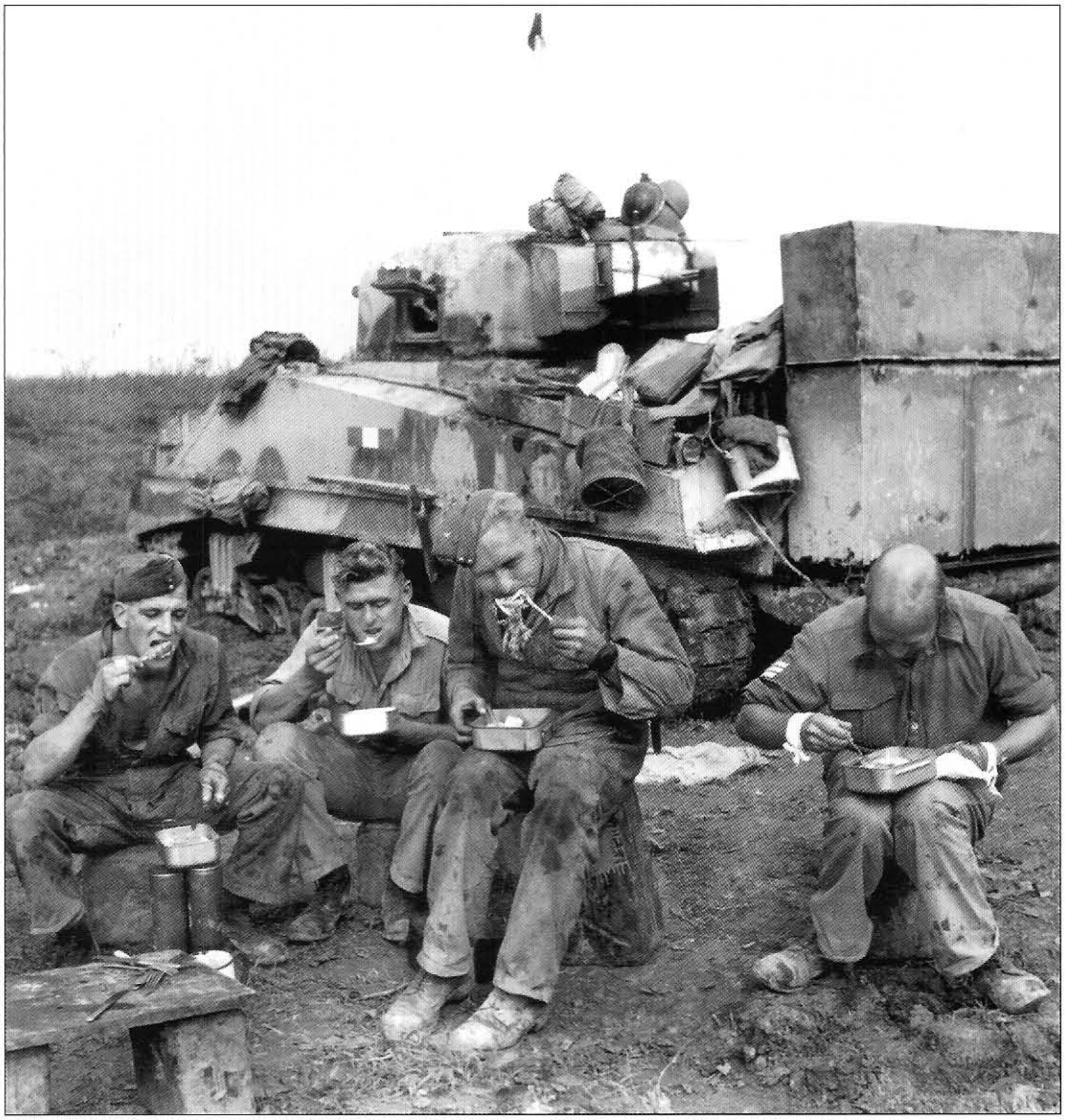
"SHEIK", a Sherman III of The Royal Scots Greys just below Mt Vesuvius. This tank is shown and discussed further in the illustrations. 29 Sept 1943. (IWM NA7457)



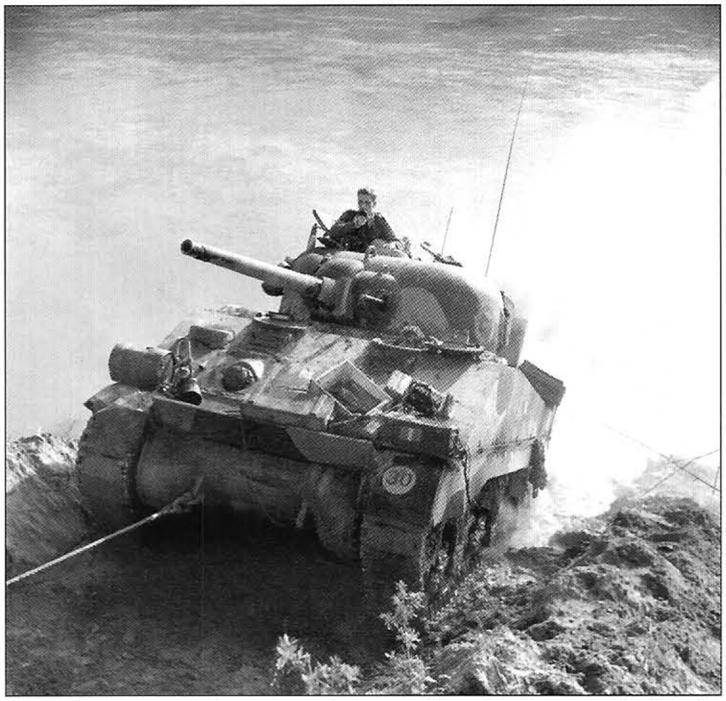
A Sherman III being recovered from the river Biferno near Campo-Marino. The markings are typical of those used by 3rd County of London Yeomanry at this time. October 1943. (IWM NA7725)



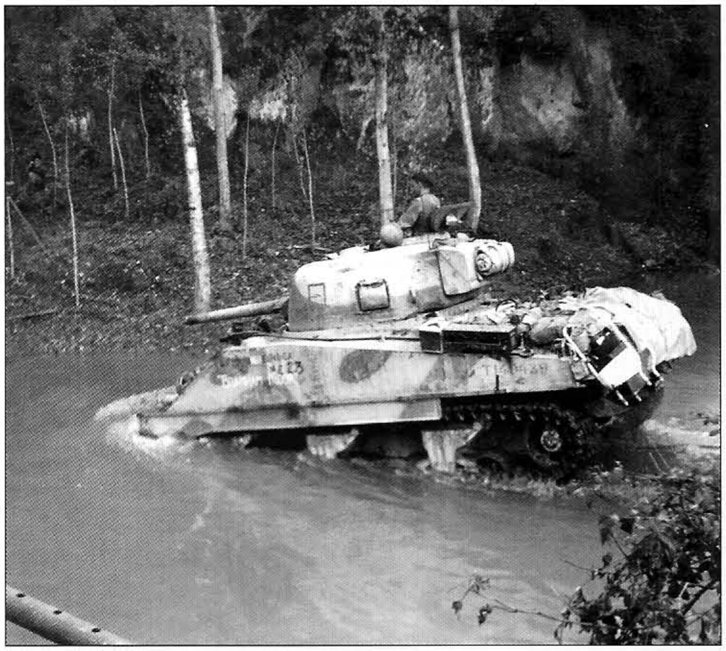
Sherman III of C Squadron, The Royal Scots Greys carrying troops of the 1/6th Queen's Regiment during mopping up operations in Torre Annunciata, heads towards Mount Vesuvius. Just visible on the hull side, slightly above and to the left of the recognition marking, is the name REPULSE in white. 1 October 1943. (IWM NA7347)



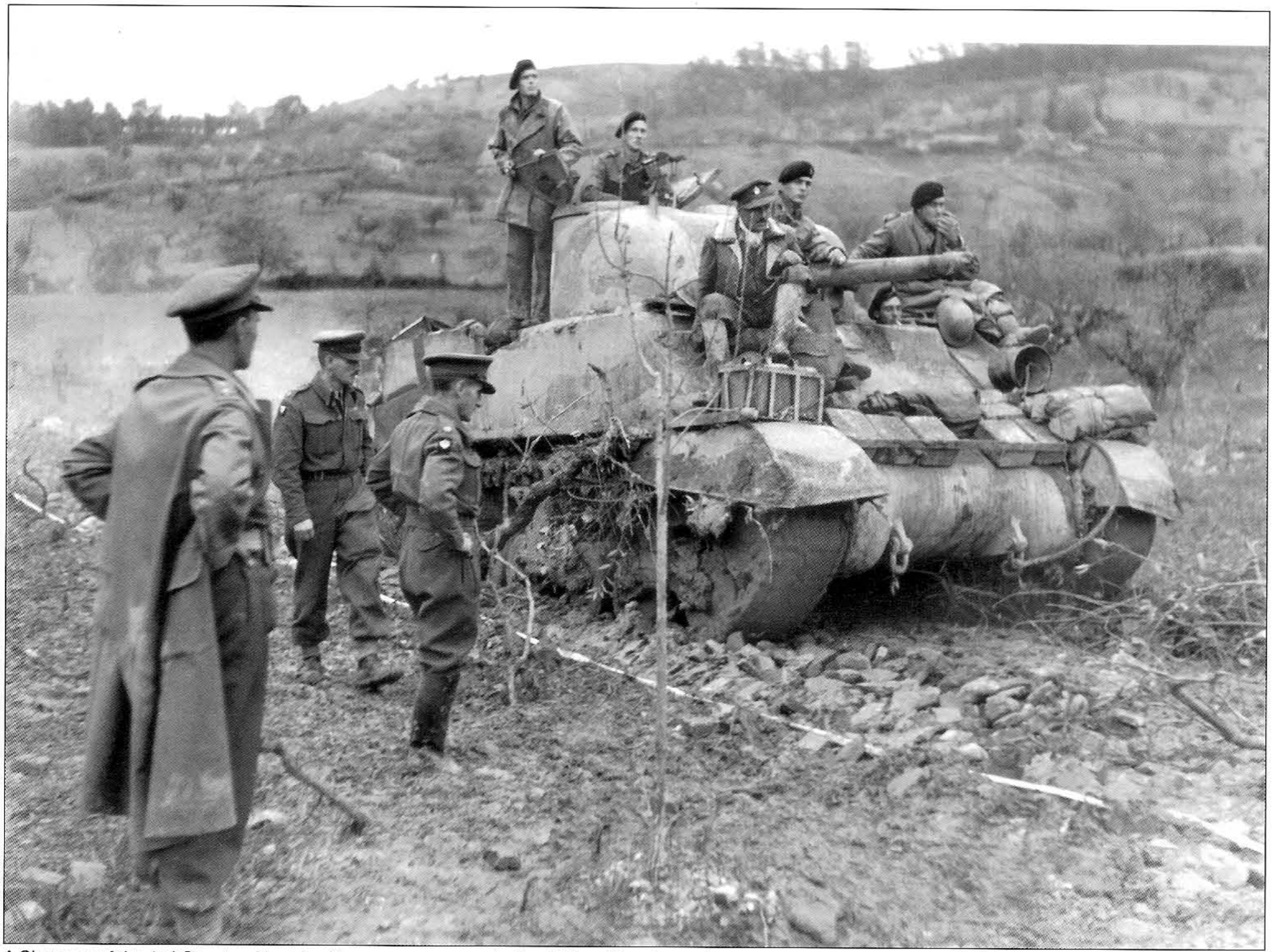
The crew of a Sherman of C Squadron, 4th County of London Yeomanry, fitted with deep wading equipment, enjoy their evening meal. In the original photo a tiny Sharpshooters badge can be seen on the cap of the man in the center. This regiment arrived in Italy on 22 September 1943 as part of 22nd Armoured Brigade of 7th Armoured Division. 15 October 1943. (IWM NA7782)



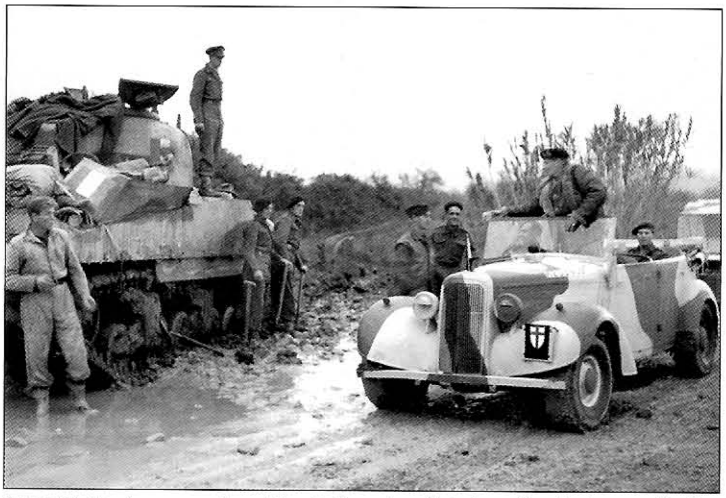
A Sherman tank of C Squadron, 4th County of London Yeomanry fording the Volturno river at Grazzanise with a little assistance. The April 1943 camouflage of a Light Mud base with a disruptive pattern of Black or Dark Green was not replaced until the end of the year but could in fact be seen in Italy until late 1944. 17 October 1943. (IWM NA7861)



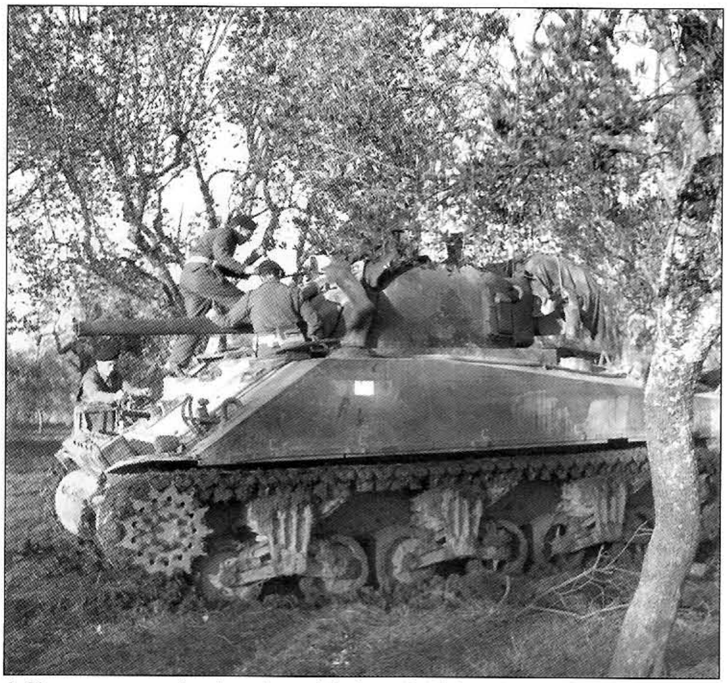
A heavily laden Sherman III of B Squadron, The Royal Scots Greys fording the Teano river. Within the regiment B Squadron was jokingly known as "Brolly Squadron" due to its officer's penchant for umbrellas. On the side below the red/white/red recognition marking is painted "BRAMHAM MOOR" probably in white. The name has been painted over other letters and numbers of which only a large, dark 23 can be read. 29 October 1943. (IWM NA8276)



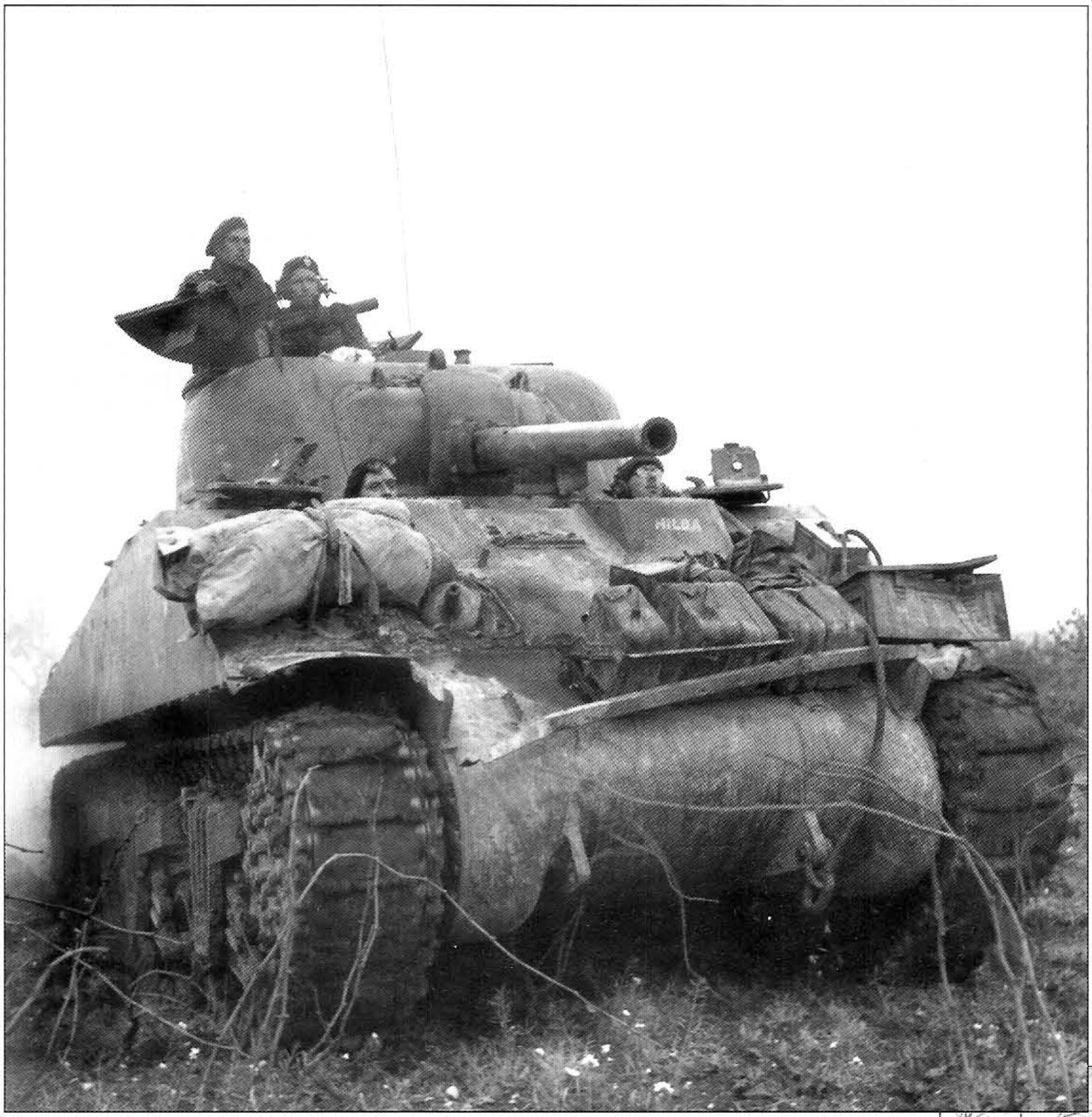
A Sherman of the 3rd County of London Yeomanry commanded by Lt Ken Piggot negotiates a newly-laid road surface, constructed over soft ground by 1926 Basuto Company, Pioneer Corps, in the advance towards the Sangro river in Italy. At this time Lt Piggot commanded a troop of C Squadron. 21 November 1943. (IWM NA8930)



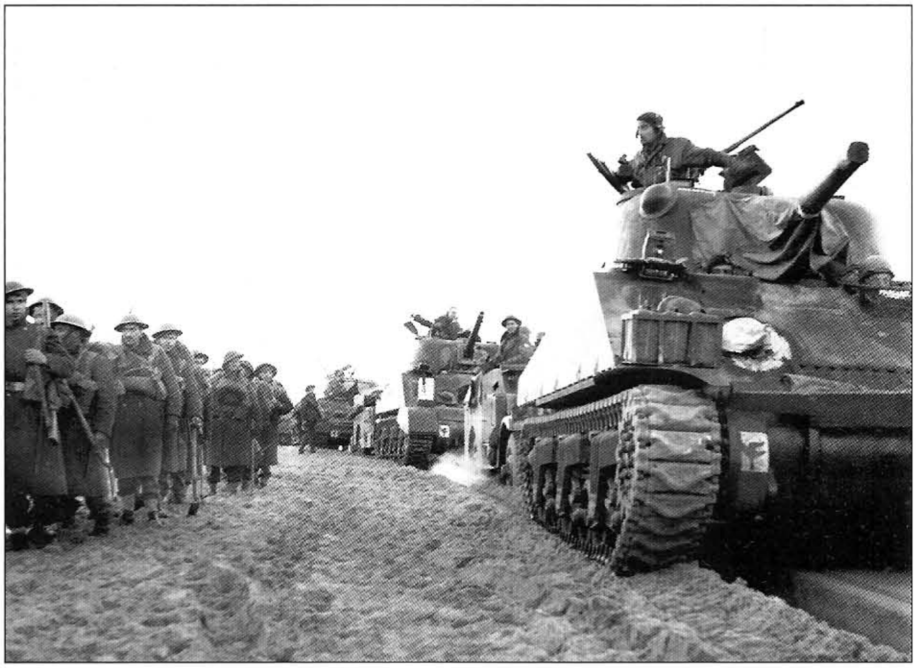
General Montgomery stops his staff car to offer cigarettes to troops digging out a bogged Sherman tank, while visiting the Sangro front. As a matter of interest a color photo taken of Montgomery's car at this time shows a camouflage pattern of Very Dark Green on Light Stone 61 – a scheme that had not been in official use for over a year. 21 November 1943. (IWM NA8943)



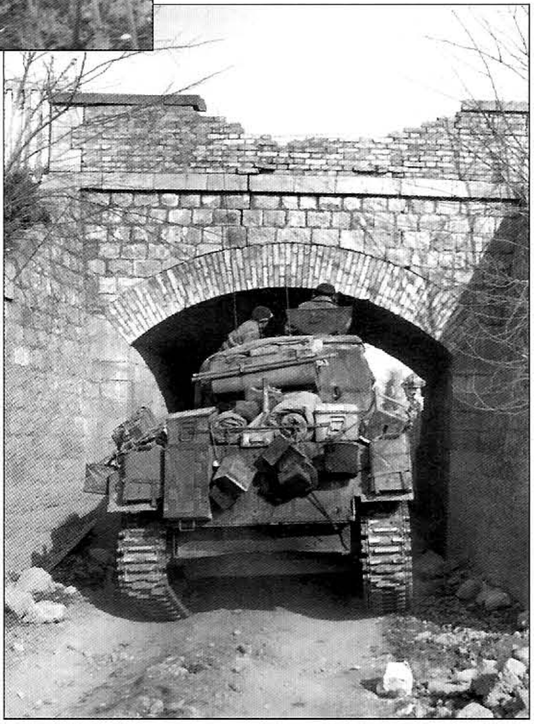
A Sherman crew clamber aboard their tank. This vehicle has at some time received a camouflage scheme of Light Mud and Black or possibly Dark Green but has become so marked and worn that lighter color is now almost invisible. 7 January 1944. (IWM NA10707)



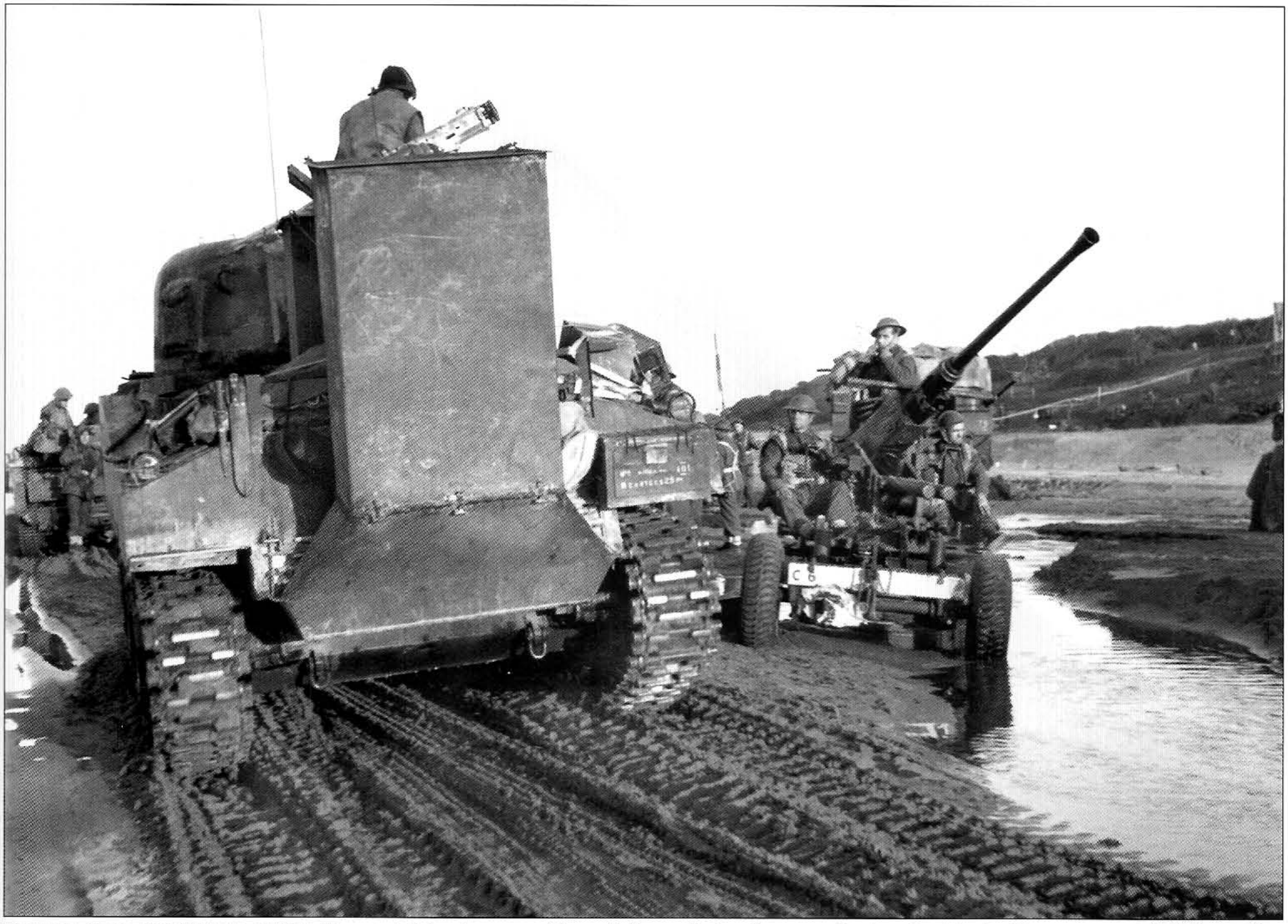
A Sherman of 50th Royal Tank Regiment of 23rd Armoured Brigade near Caldari. In common with many British tanks operating in Italy, it carries almost no markings. Just visible are the yellow A Squadron sign on the turret side and the name HILDA on the front of the driver's position. 17 December 1943. (IWM NA9992)



Sherman tanks and White Scout Cars of 23rd Armoured Brigade come ashore at Anzio. The Brigade's Liver Bird insignia is clearly visible and the driver's position carries the name MARGARET in white, part of the name being underlined. Of note is the waterproofing on the main gun and the hull machinegun. Of 23rd Armoured Brigade's three regiments only 46th RTR participated in this operation. 22 January 1944. (IWM NA11037)

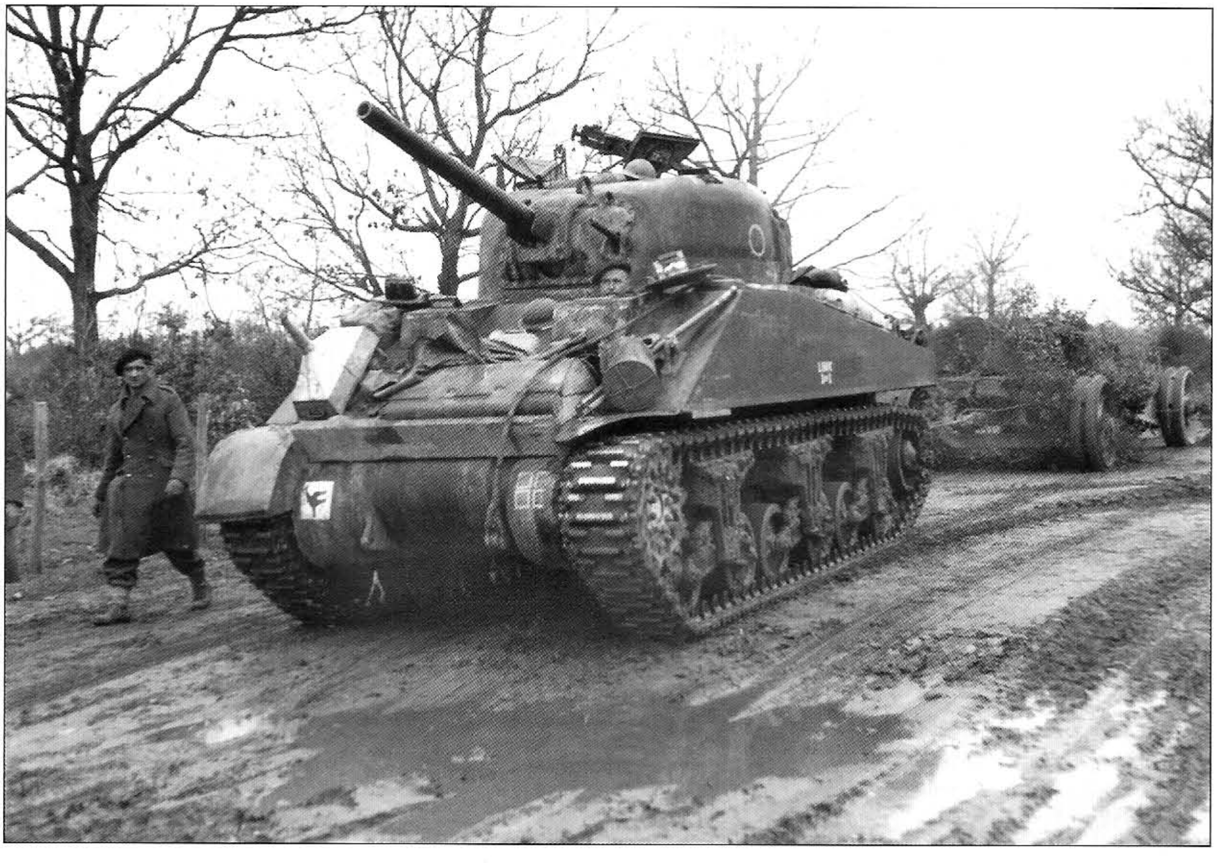


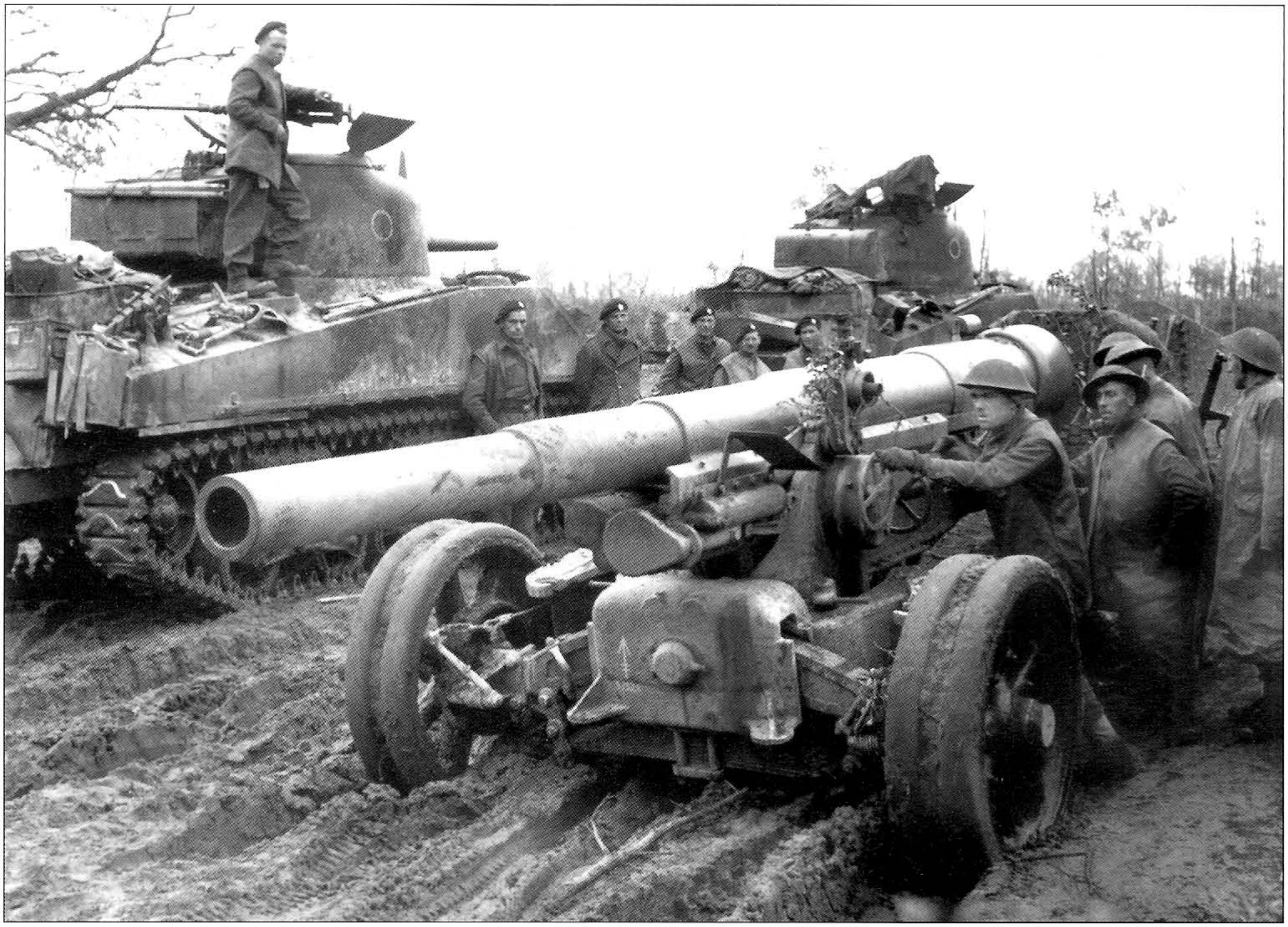
A Sherman III squeezes under a low railway bridge as it moves up towards the River Garigliano, Italy. Again the vehicle's original two-color camouflage has been covered with mud and dust. The amount of stowage is typical of British tanks. This tank is fitted with Straight Steel tread track links often referred to as metal cleats. 18 January 1944. (IWM NA10941)



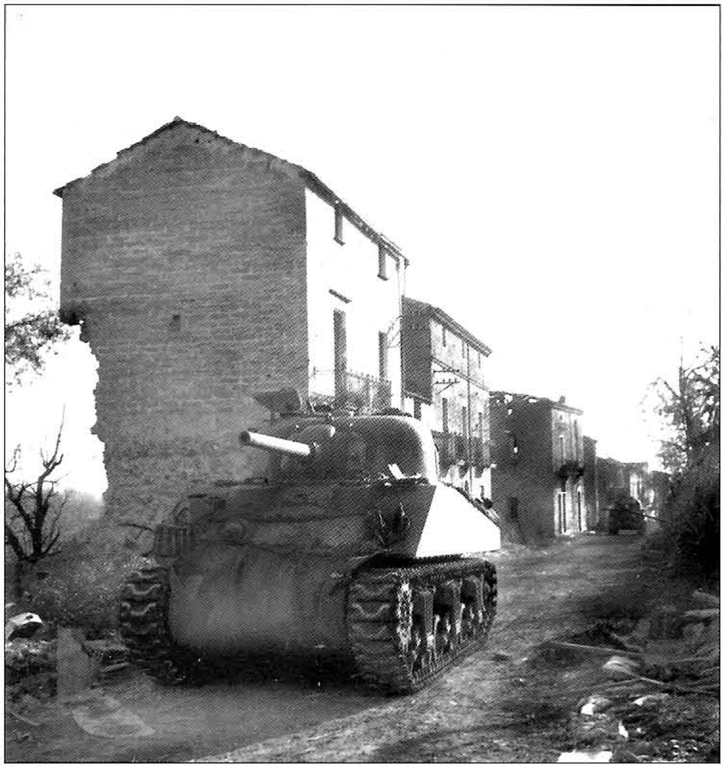
Sherman tanks and Carriers of 23rd Armoured Brigade pass a 40mm Bofors anti-aircraft gun on the beach at Anzio. The arrangement of the wading equipment is clearly shown. 22 January 1944. (IWM NA11043)

A Sherman of 46th Royal Tank Regiment towing a German 155mm gun, captured by the 2nd North Staffordshires. Although an independent brigade the sequence of Unit Serial Numbers normally used by an armored division can clearly be seen here – a white number 86 on a red square. The C Squadron circle, in yellow for the second senior regiment, can be seen on the turret side. Several US shipping markings are visible on the hull side, some roughly covered over, indicating that this tank retains its original US Army Olive Drab base coat. 23 January 1944. (IWM NA11308)

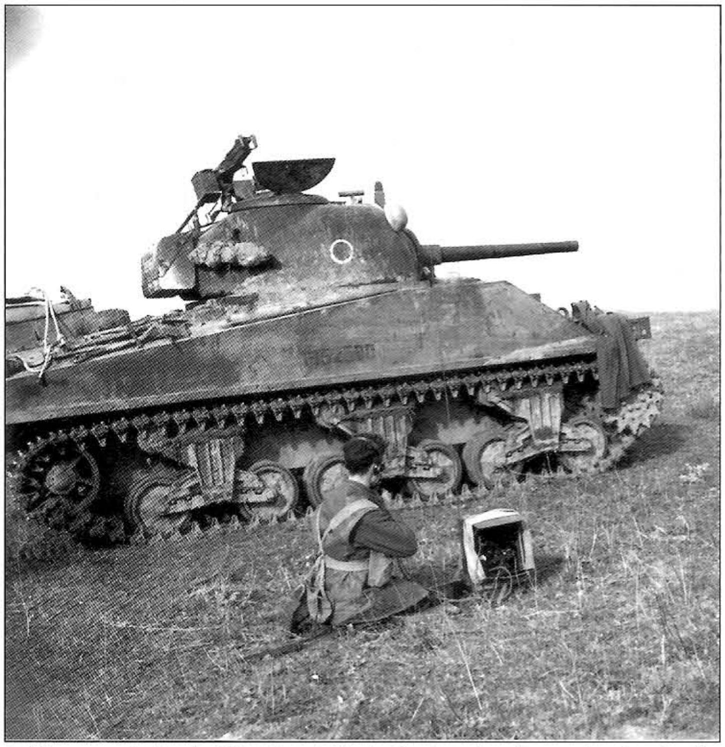




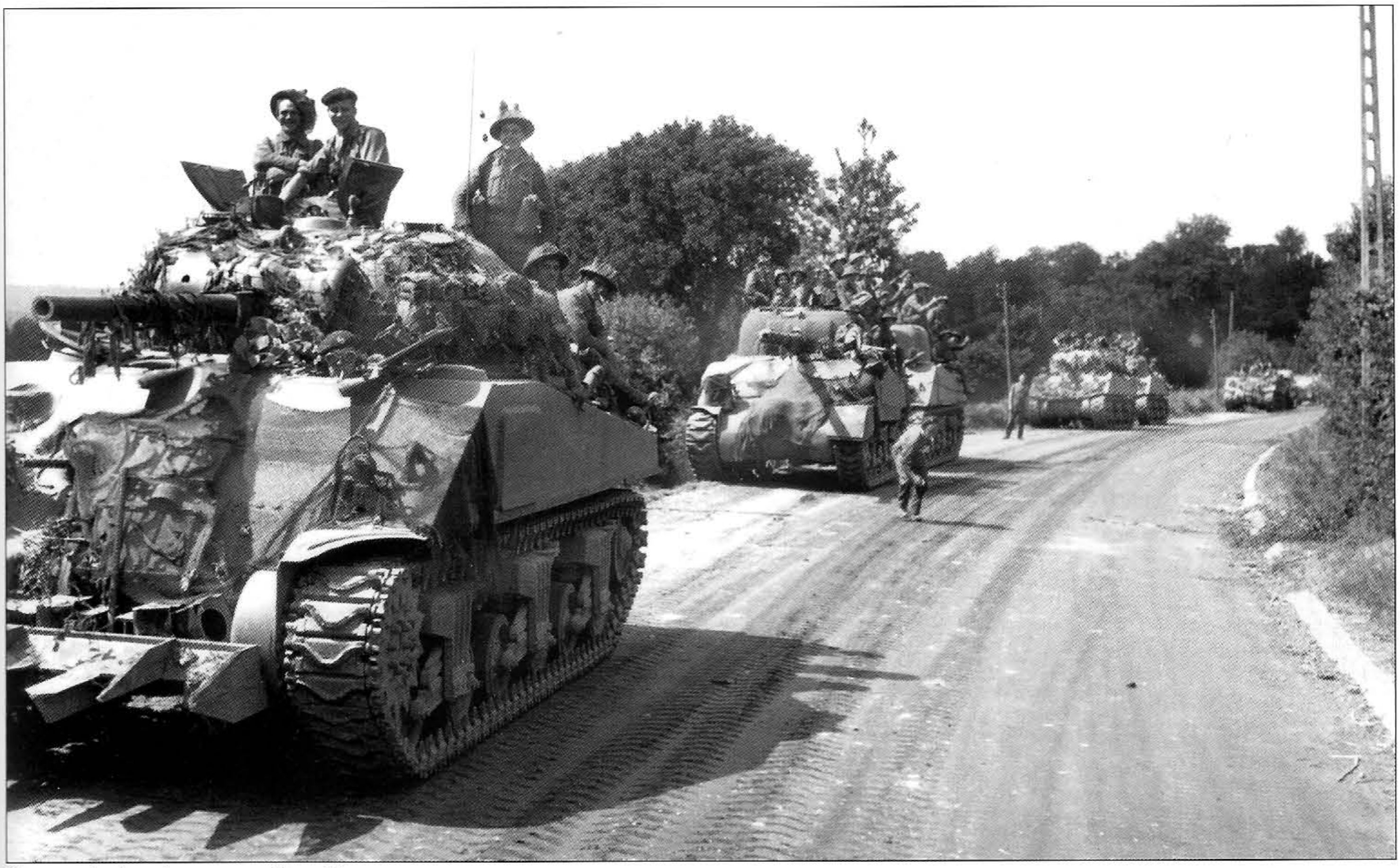
Sherman tanks of C Squadron 46th Royal Tank Regiment. The nearest tank displays a worn and dust-covered camouflage of Light Mud and either Black or Dark Green. 23 January 1944. (IWM NA11313)



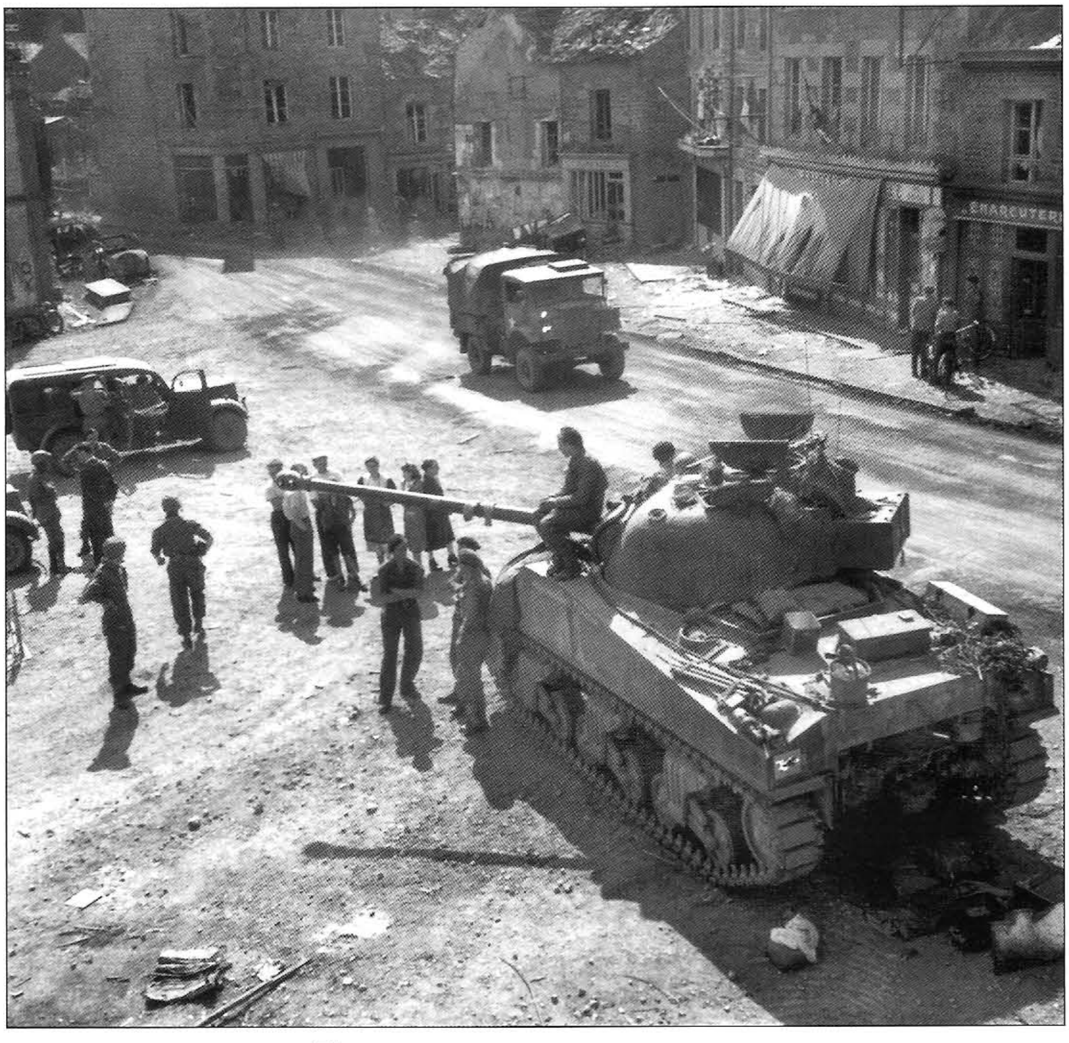
Sherman tanks passing through the village of Lorenzo. Possibly of 46th RTR, the only markings visible are the remnants of a red/white/red recognition sign at the center of the transmission cover. 24 January 1944. (IWM NA11347)



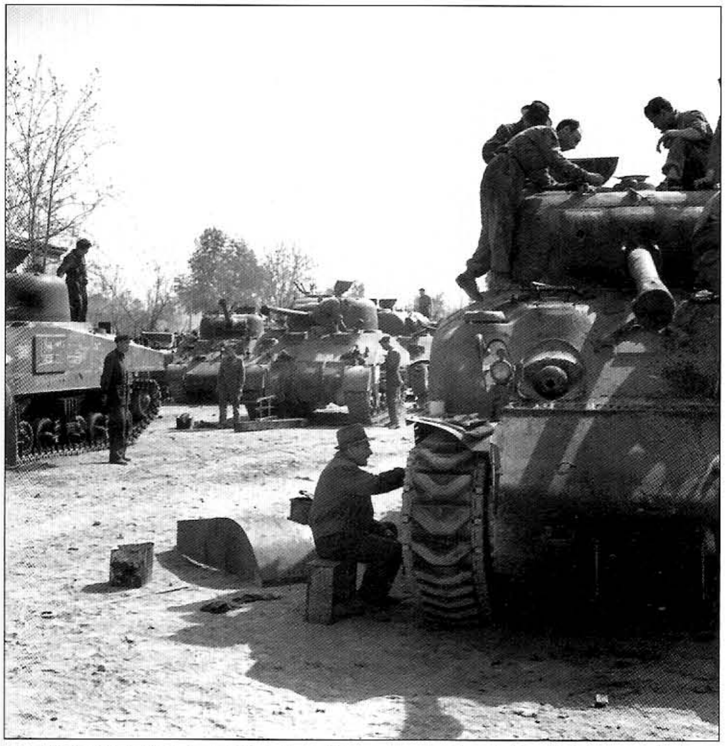
A Sherman tank of 46th Royal Tank Regiment, with a signaler in the foreground, fires in support of the Loyal Regiment near Anzio. This tank is shown and discussed further in the illustrations. 25 January 1944. (IWM NA11410)



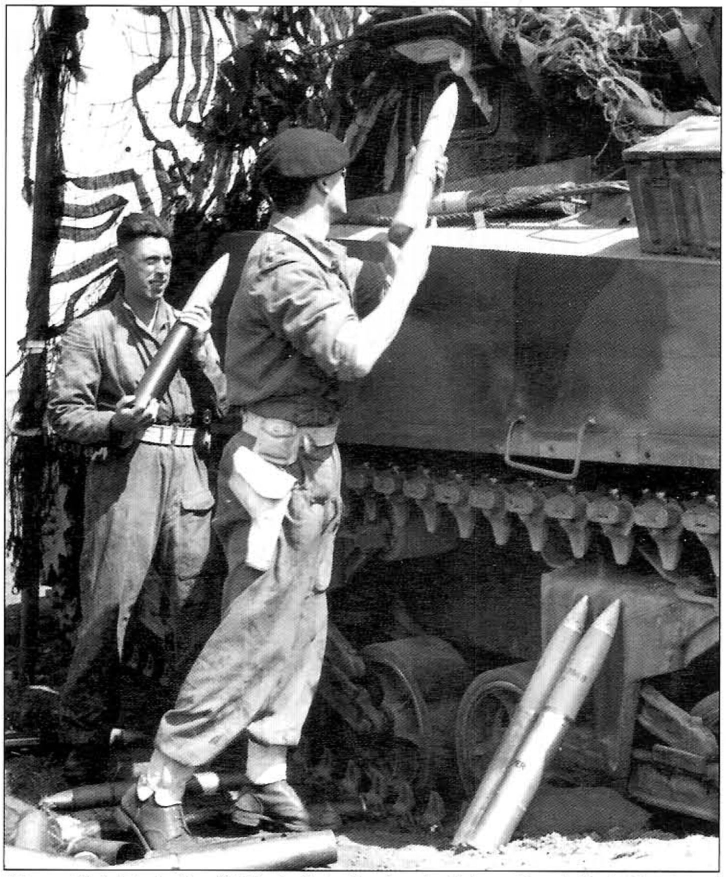
Sherman tanks advance near Flers. The nearest tank has a version of the Cullin Prong device adopted to enable tanks to barge through hedgerows, a common feature of the Normandy countryside. Although effective, most British tanks received these too late to be of much use. 17 August 1944. (IWM B9336)



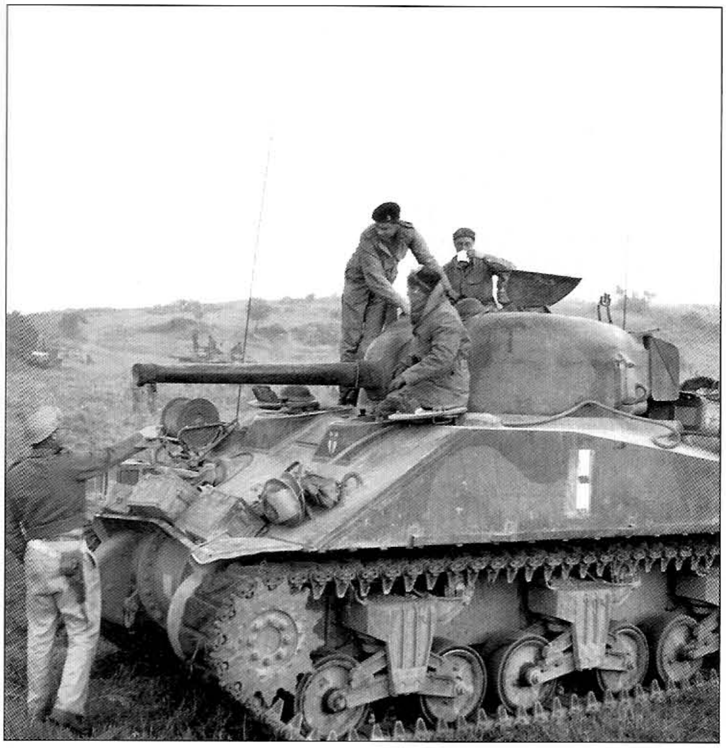
A Sherman I Firefly in the village of Putanges. Despite the best efforts of the censor, an AoS sign of a senior armored regiment can be seen on the right of the rear hull and the remains of what may be 11th Armoured Division's formation badge can be seen on the left. 20 August 1944. (IWM B9477)



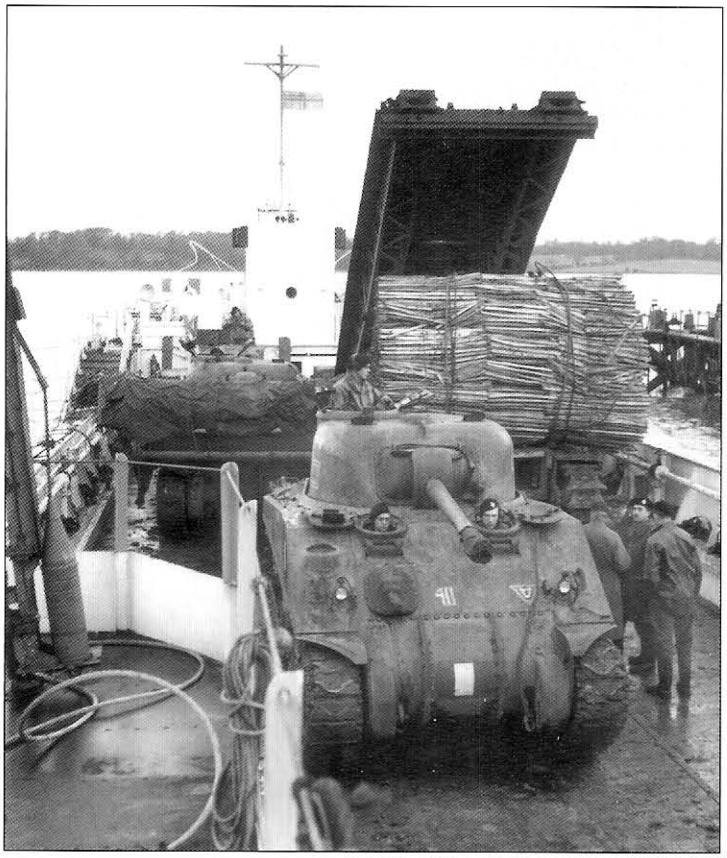
Repair work being carried out on Sherman tanks at No. 1 Advanced Base Workshops in Italy. This photo clearly shows the Rubber Chevron type tracks. 18 April 1944. (IWM NA14007)



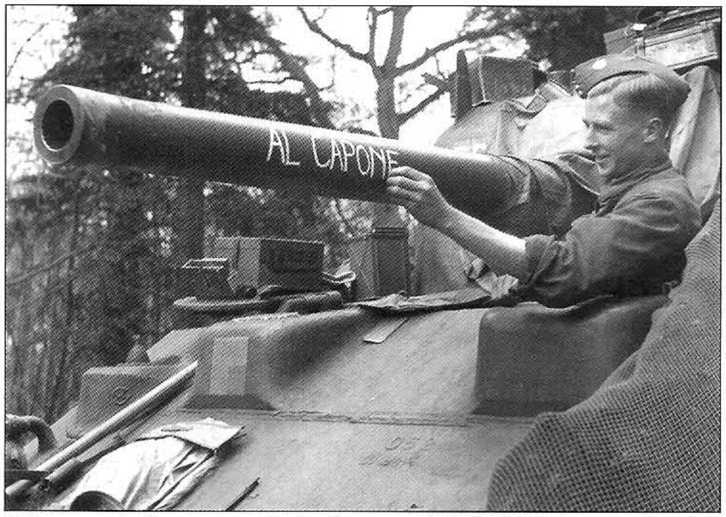
75mm High Explosive (HE) shells being loaded into a Royal Tank Regiment Sherman tank in the Anzio bridgehead. Shermans were frequently called upon to operate in an indirect fire role particularly in Italy. A small handrail has been welded to the hull side. 5 May 1944. (IWM NA14605)



Sherman OP tank, possibly a I with reworked driver's and lap gunner's positions, attached to a regiment of Priest 105mm self-propelled guns in Italy. The 8th Army formation badge is visible in front of the driver's hatch. 27 May 1944. (IWM NA15573)

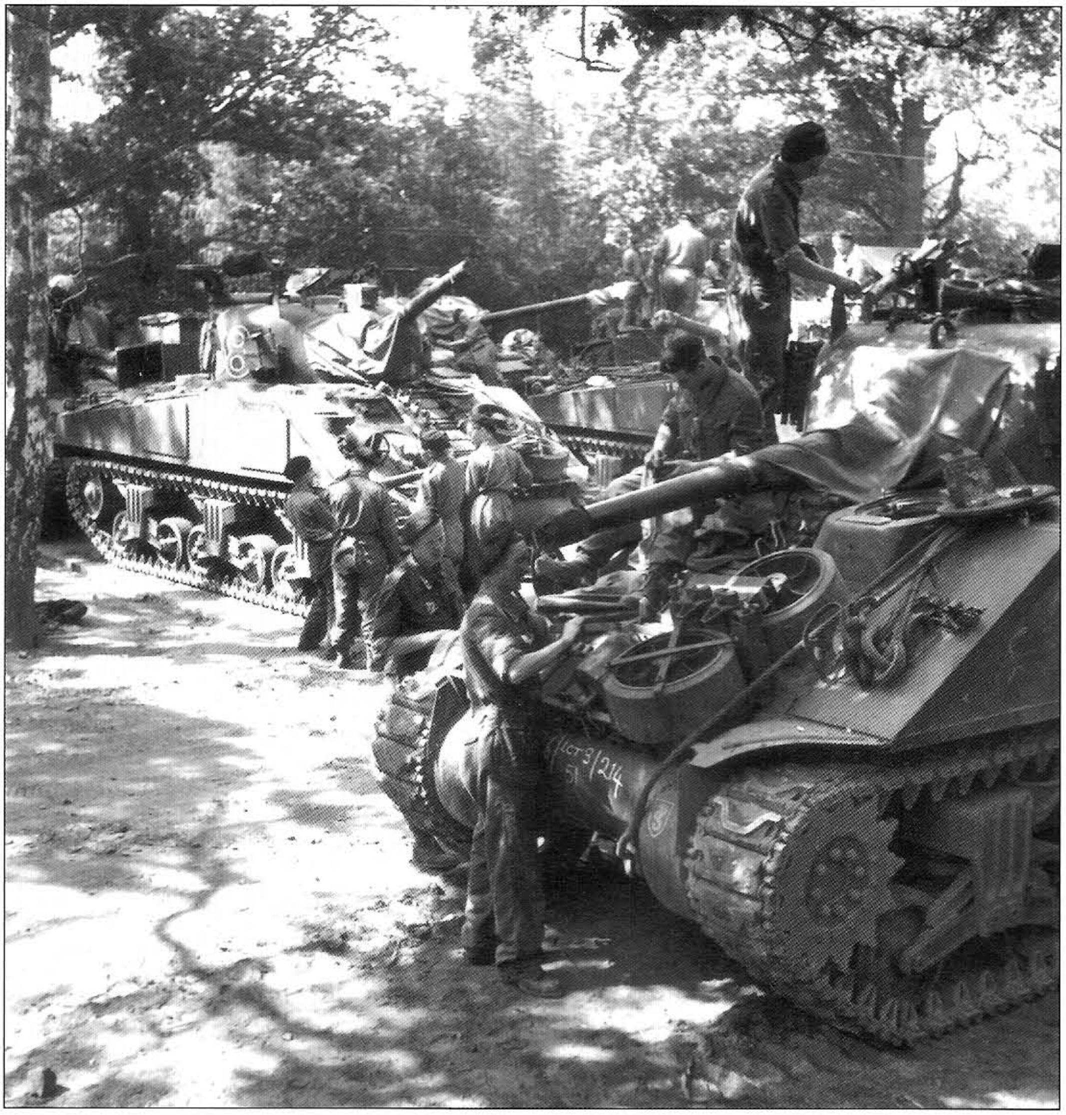


In Britain preparations for the Normandy landings were well underway. An elderly Sherman, Churchill AVRE with fascine and Churchill bridgelayer of 79th Armoured Division are loaded into a landing craft, Saxmundham-Ipswich area. This tank is shown and discussed further in the illustrations. 28 January 1944. (IWM H35473)

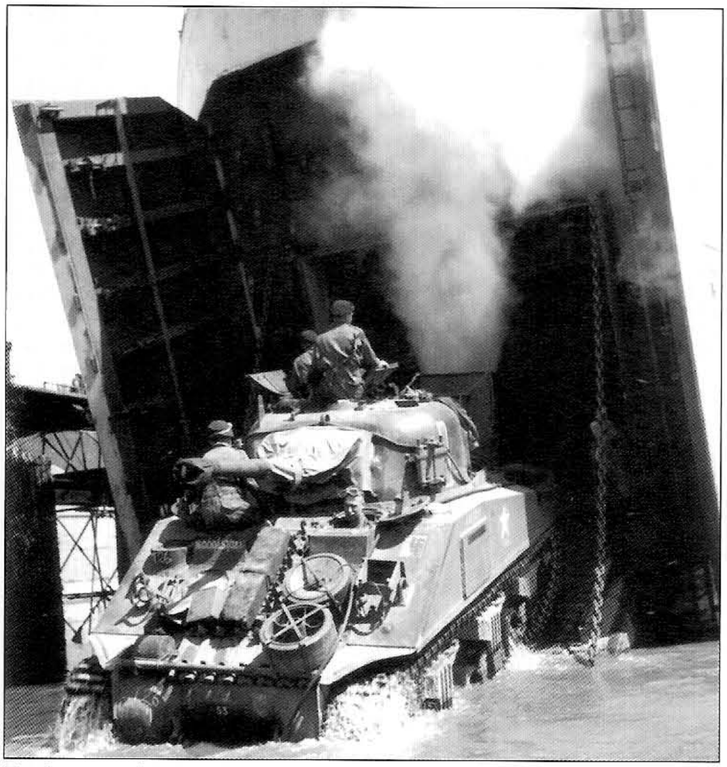


A Sherman tank crewman chalks the name "AL CAPONE" on the barrel of his vehicle's 75mm gun. In front of the lap gunners position can be seen the marking denoting the 2nd battery of an artillery regiment – a large blue square with a small red square in the bottom right hand corner. Behind the main gun can be seen the Unit Serial Number indicating the regiment's place within the division. 29 April 1944. (IWM H37995)

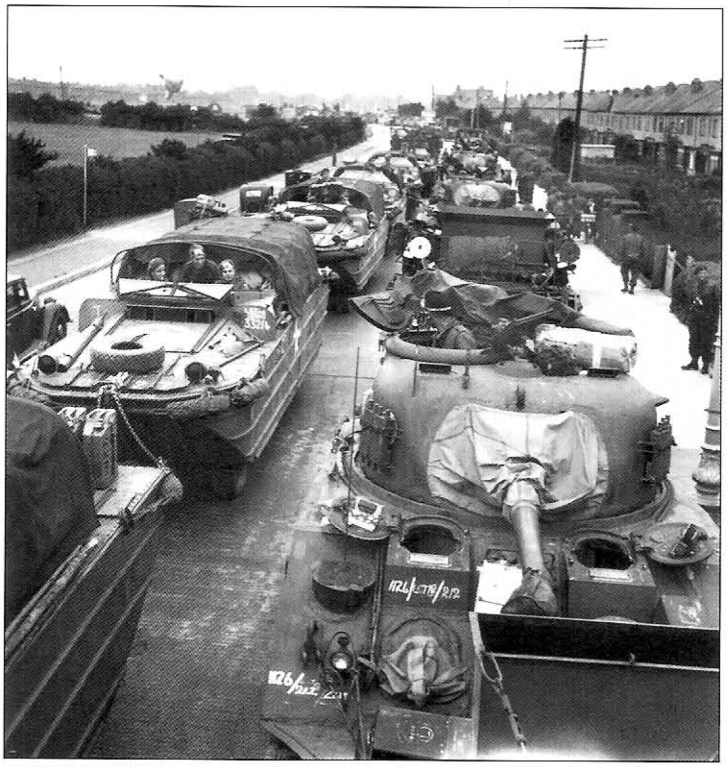
Sergeant A Yorke of 13th/18th Royal Hussars in the turret of his Sherman tank. 30 May 1944. (IWM H 8968)



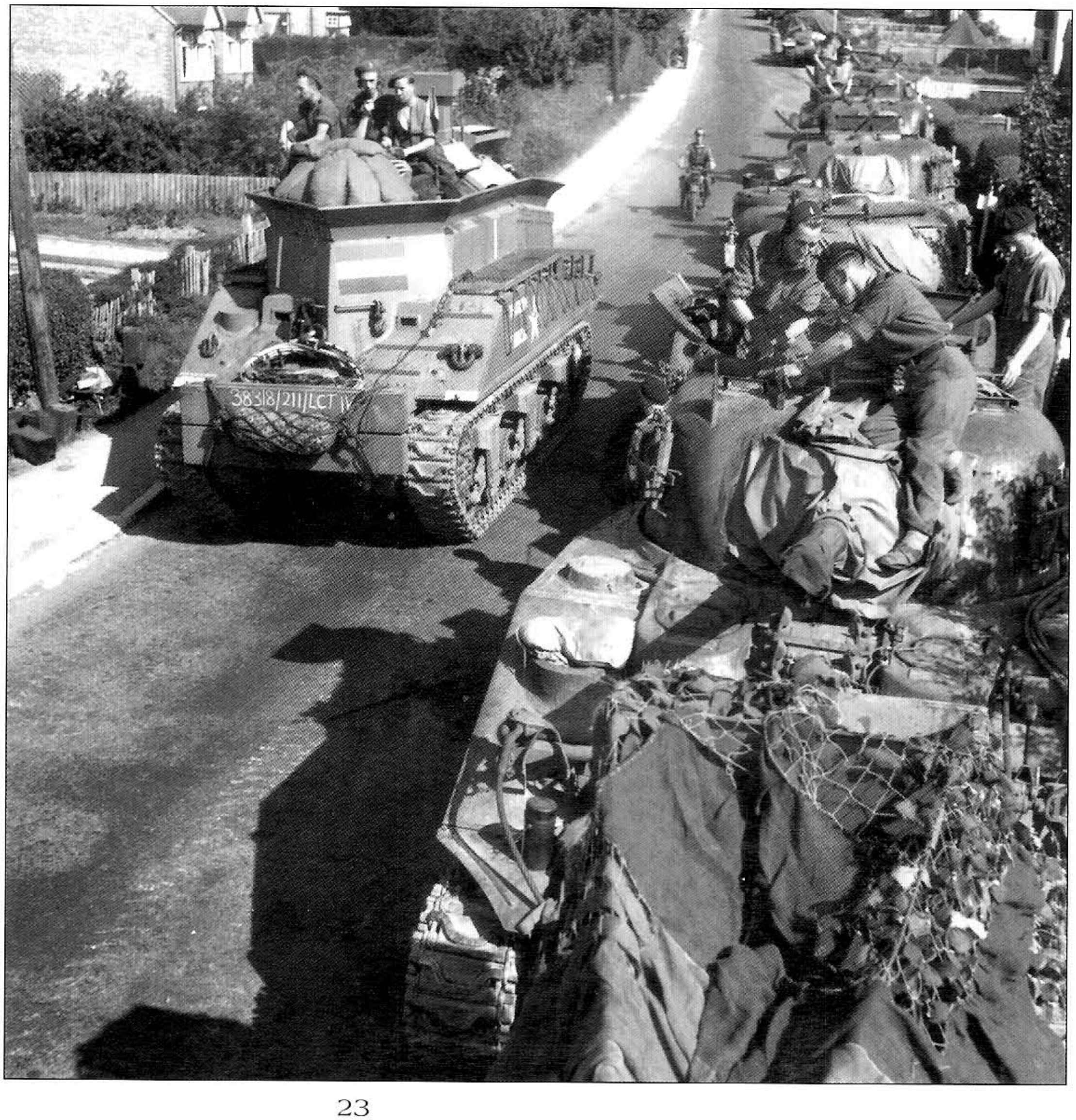
Sherman tank crews of C Squadron, 13th/18th Royal Hussars prepare their vehicles for the invasion. Individual tank numbers, in red outlined white, landing ship markings and the brigade's formation sign - jokingly referred to as the pregnant pilchard can all be seen. The tank at left has the name CHARMER on a black background just above the hull appliqué armor with a C Squadron sign directly behind that. 30 May 1944. (IWM H38970)



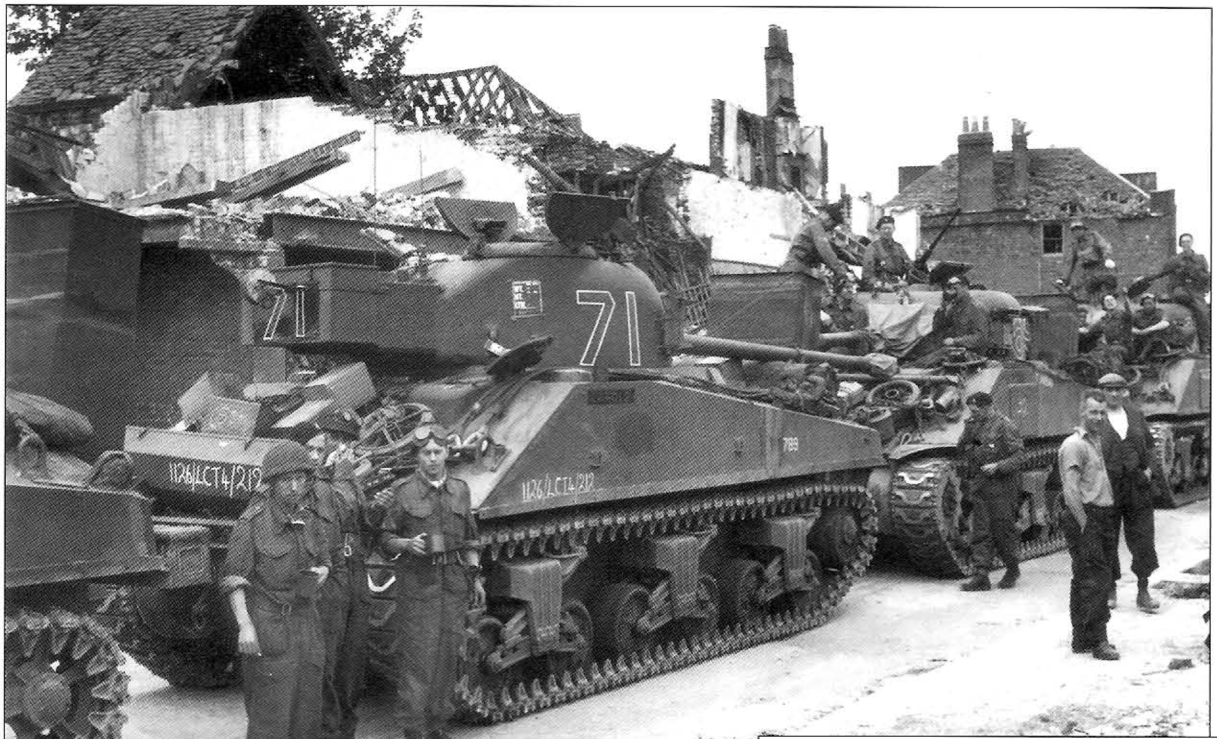
Final preparations get underway as this Sherman of 13th/18th Hussars is reversed into a landing ship at Gosport. The number 1 on the turret side would seem to indicate a RHQ vehicle. 1 June 1944. (IWM H38978)



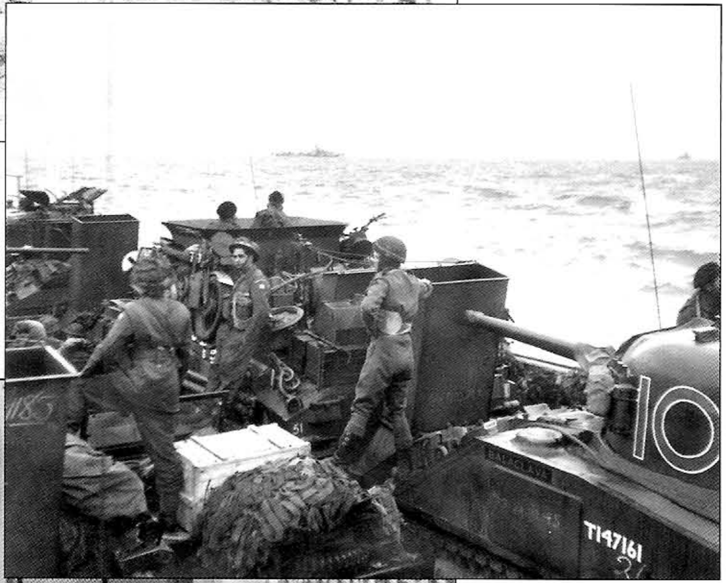
DUKW Amphibians pass Sherman tanks of 13th/18th Royal Hussars, Gosport. Behind the lead Sherman can be seen an ARV with it's special wading extension. 2 June 1944. (IWM H38992)



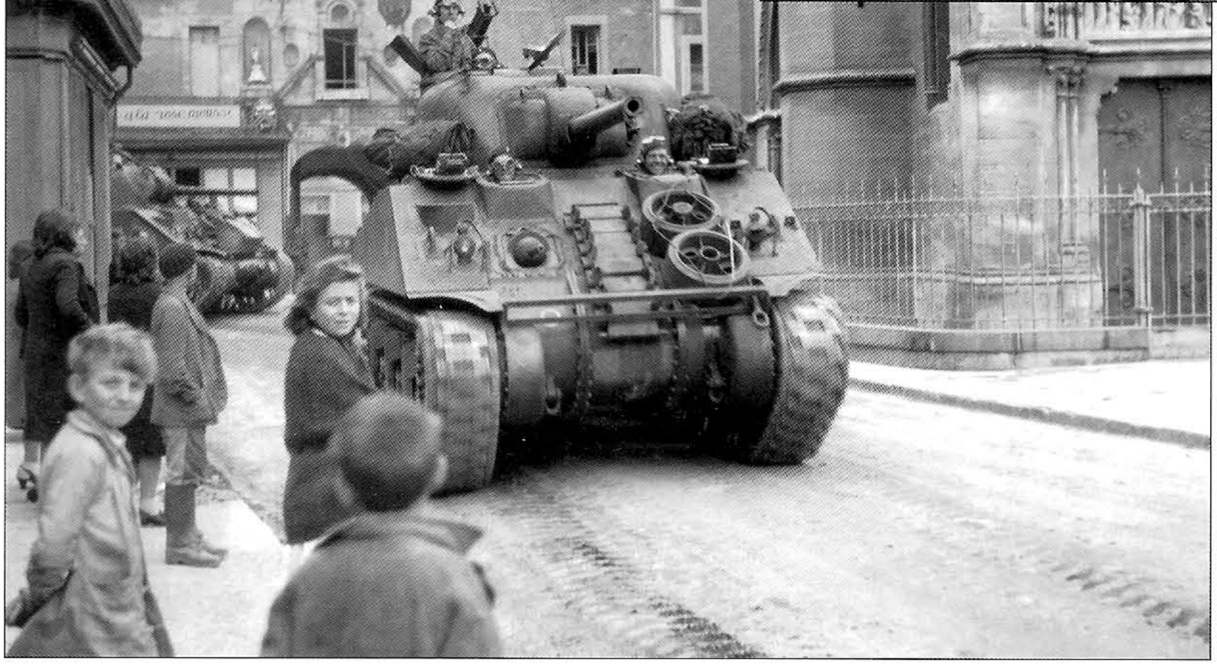
A Sherman BARV and Sherman tanks of 13th/18th Royal Hussars during the regiment's move from Petworth to Gosport. On the left of the BARV superstructure can be seen the formation badge of the independent Beach Groups – a red circle enclosing a red anchor on a light blue background. 2 June 1944. (IWM H38987)



A photo of a well known tank, CAROLE, a Sherman VC of C Squadron, 13th/18th Royal Hussars waiting to be loaded at Gosport. The tank's number is repeated on the blanket box painted onto some kind of waterproof fabric. The WD number, T 228789, is been obscure here. CAROLE's crew are from left: Trooper Fred Shaw, Trooper Doug Kay, Sergeant Fred Scamp and Trooper Bill Humphries. 3 June 1944. (IWM H38995)

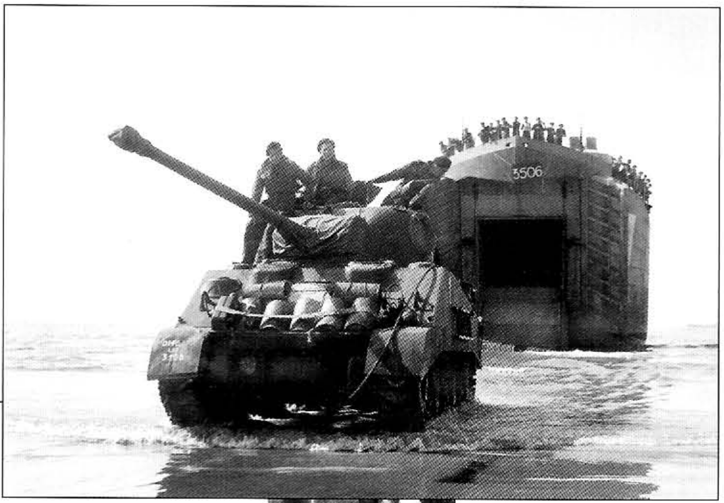


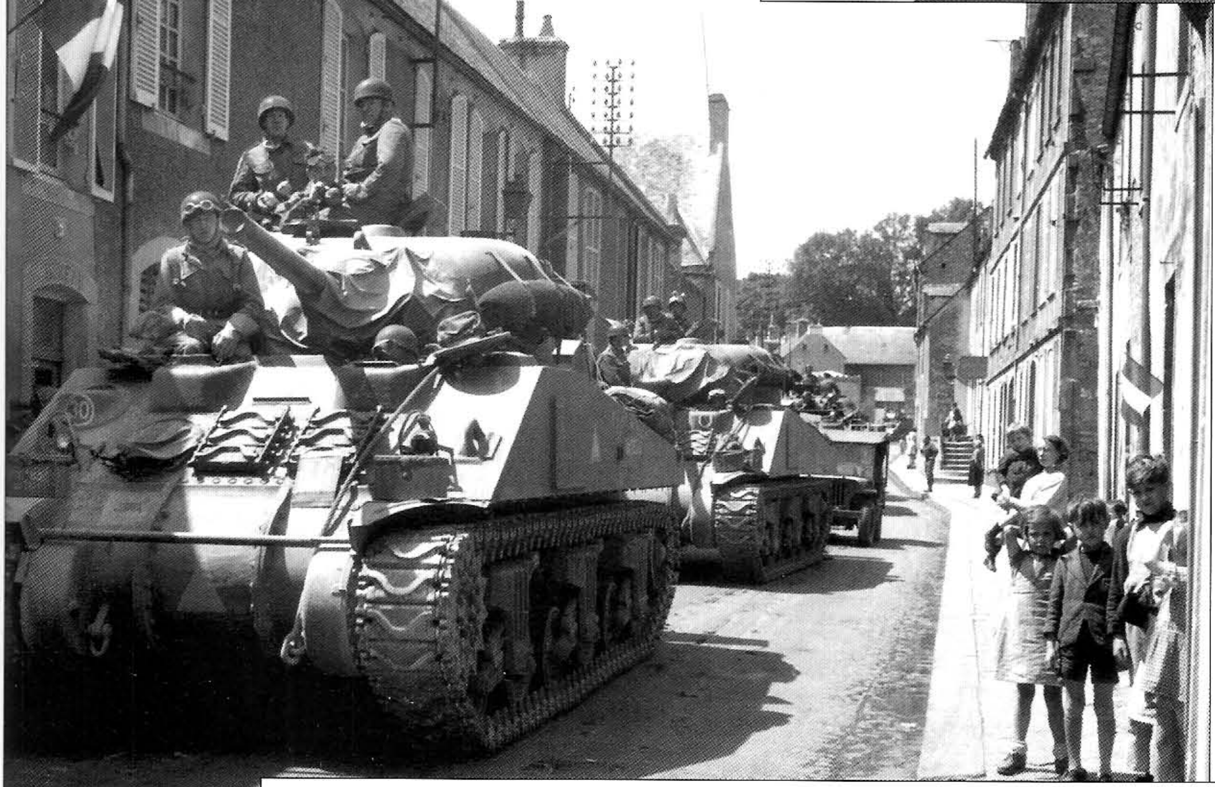
Sherman gun tanks, an ARV and a jeep of 13th/18th Royal Hussars, 27th Armoured Brigade are visible in this photo of a landing craft en route for Normandy. The tank in the foreground, BALACLAVA, is also shown in a following photo. (IWM B5110)



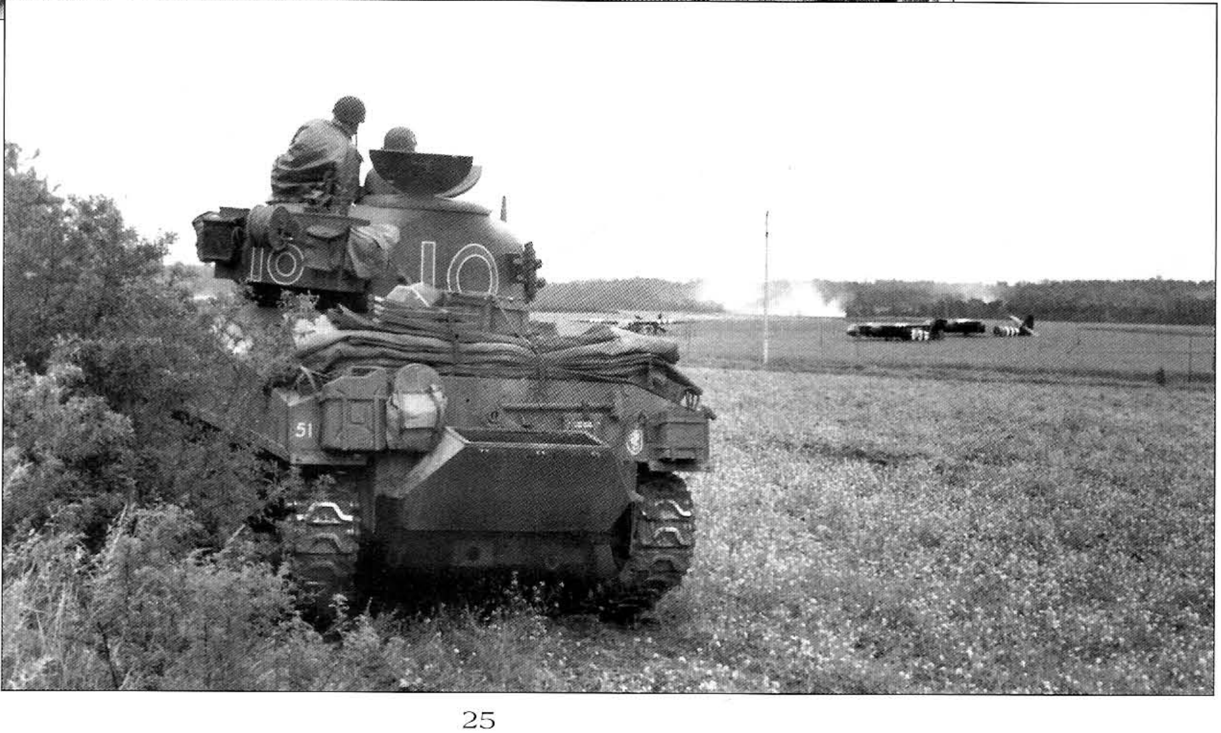
Sherman tanks driving through Douvres-la Delivrande, Normandy. The use of the WE 210 "Double I" tracks is unusual at this time. This tank carries no identifying markings other than the C Squadron circle on the left of the transmission cover. 8 June 1944. (IWM B5267)

A Sherman Firefly coming ashore from an LST (Landing Ship Tank) on Sword Beach. Although no markings, other than a Bridging Classification, can be seen the authorized regimental history attributes this tank to the 3rd County of London Yeomanry. 7 June 1944. (IWM B5130)

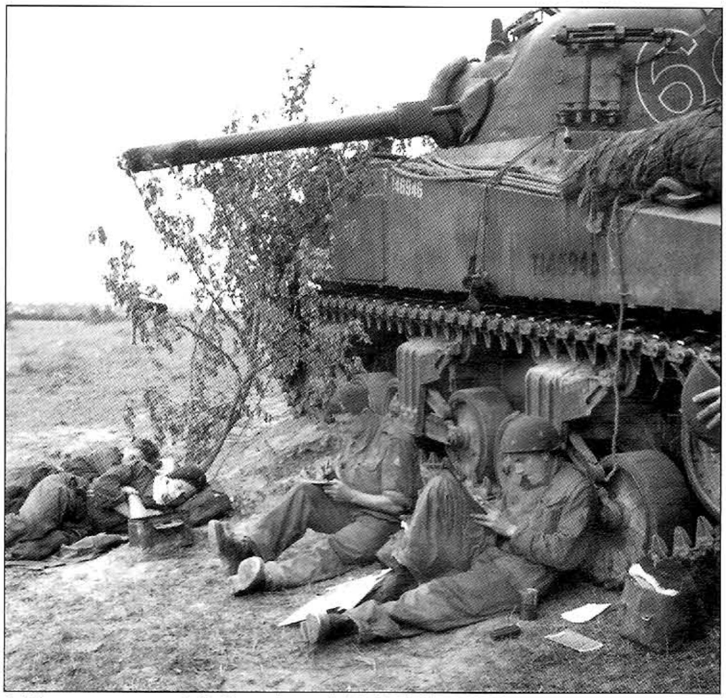




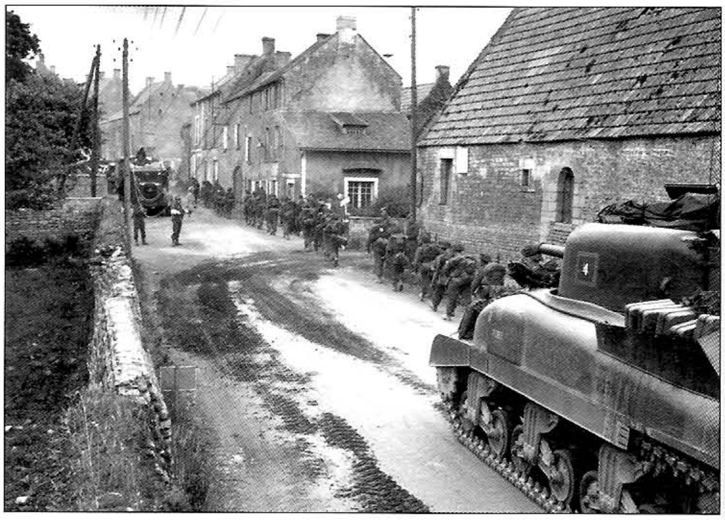
Shermans of 2nd Fife and Forfar Yeomanry, the junior armored regiment of 11th Armoured Division, passing through Bayeaux. The blue A Squadron sign can be seen on the hull side and at the center of the transmission cover. There is also a name painted above this last marking which is unfortunately indecipherable. 7-8 June 1944. (IWM B5685)



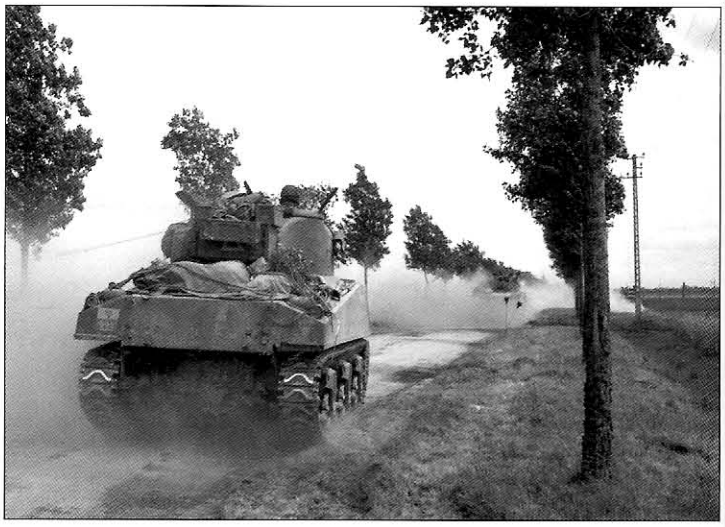
Last seen on board a landing ship heading towards Normandy, BALACLAVA a Sherman of regimental HQ 13th/18th Royal Hussars, fires on German troops using the Horsa gliders in the background as cover near Ranville. The vehicle's number is repeated on the rear of the blanket box and the AoS sign and formation badge are both clearly visible. 10 June 1944. (IWM B5345)



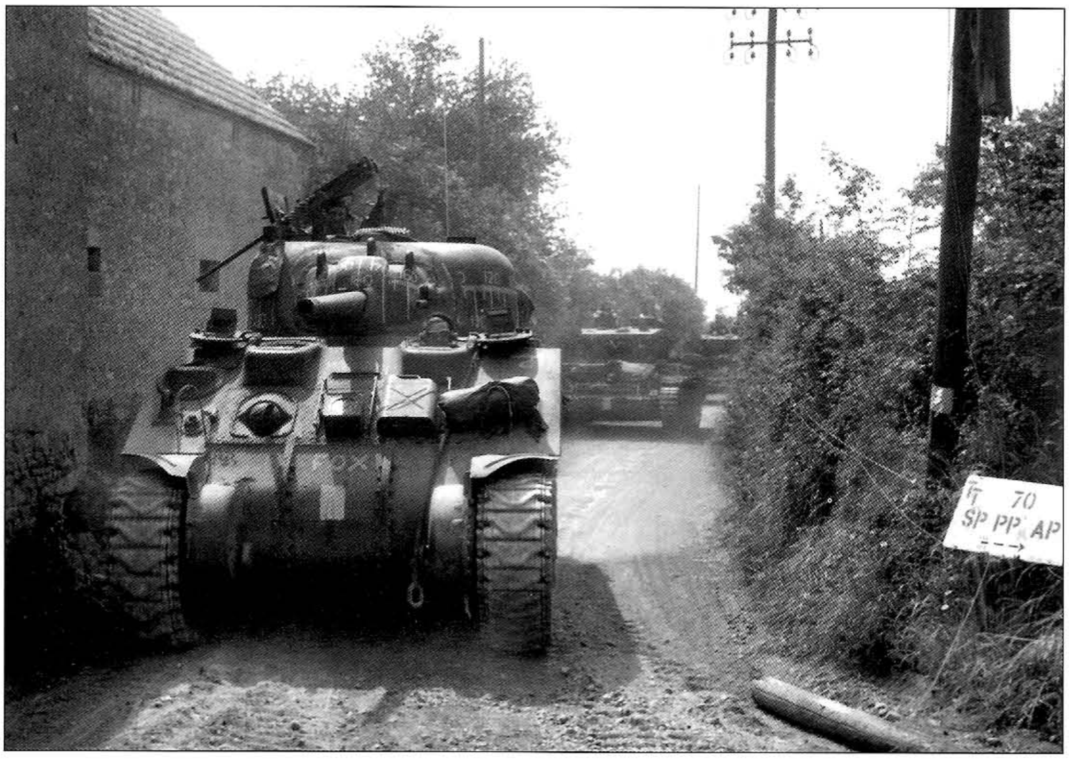
A Sherman crew of C Squadron, 13th/18th Royal Hussars, 27th Armoured Brigade, rest and write letters home by the side of their vehicle. This tank can also be seen in the photo of CAROLE taken at Gosport on 3 June 1944. The original serial number, which would have been applied in US Blue Drab before shipment to Britain, seems to have been retained. 10 June 1944. (IWM B5425)



Infantry and Sherman tanks advance through Reviers. This Sherman II almost certainly belongs to 4th Armoured Brigade. At this time 44th RTR, the junior regiment, used a system of white troop numbers enclosed within a blue squadron sign. The name REBEL has been painted in white, using a stencil, on the hull appliqué armor. 11 June 1944. (IWM B5386)

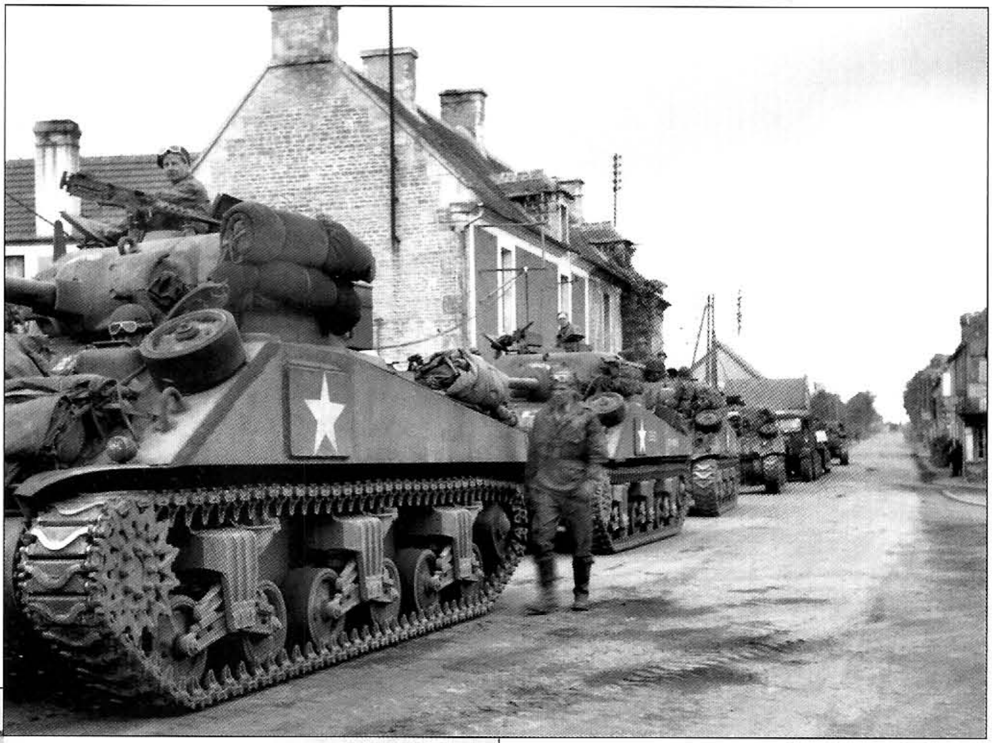


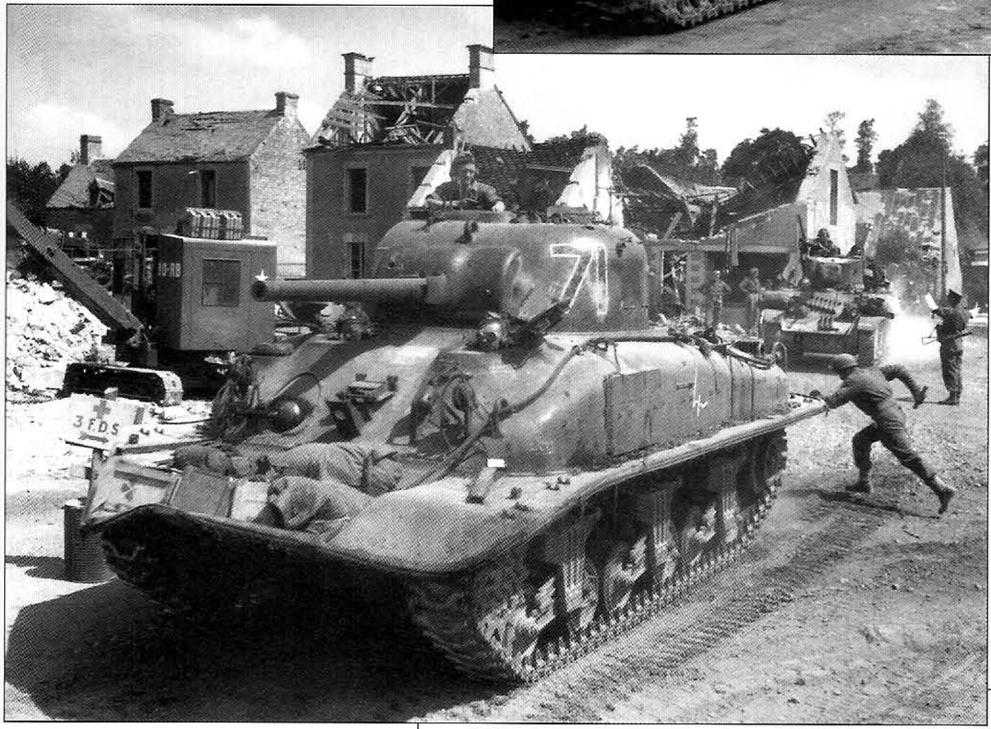
A Sherman Firefly of 24th Lancers, 8th Armoured Brigade, moving up to the front near St Leger. The brigade's famous Fox Face badge can be seen on the left of the hull combined with the number 995 on a red square. The white line under the number indicates that these are Corps troops. An A Squadron sign in yellow can be seen on the rear of the turret extension. 11 June 1944. (IWM B5417)



A Sherman V leads Centaurs of the Royal Marines Armoured Support Group near Tilly-sur-Seulles. This tank is shown and discussed further in the illustrations. 13 June 1944. (IWM

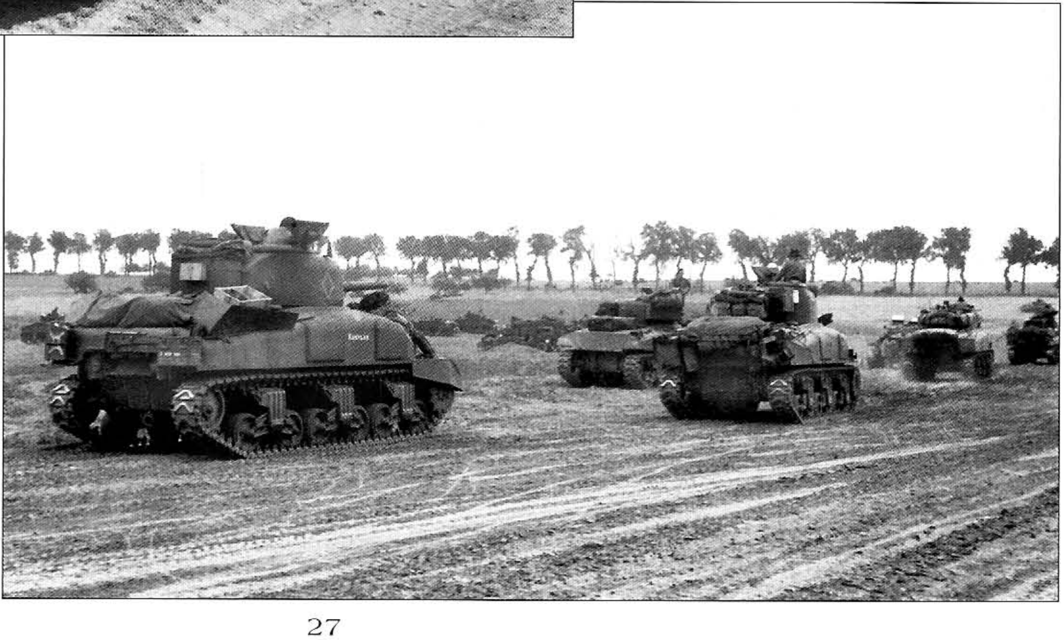
Sherman tanks lined up in the village of Carelle await the order to move into action. The use of the white, five-pointed star was quickly discontinued and is not often seen on British Shermans - it provided an excellent aiming-point for German tank gunners. 15 June 1944. (IWM B5507)

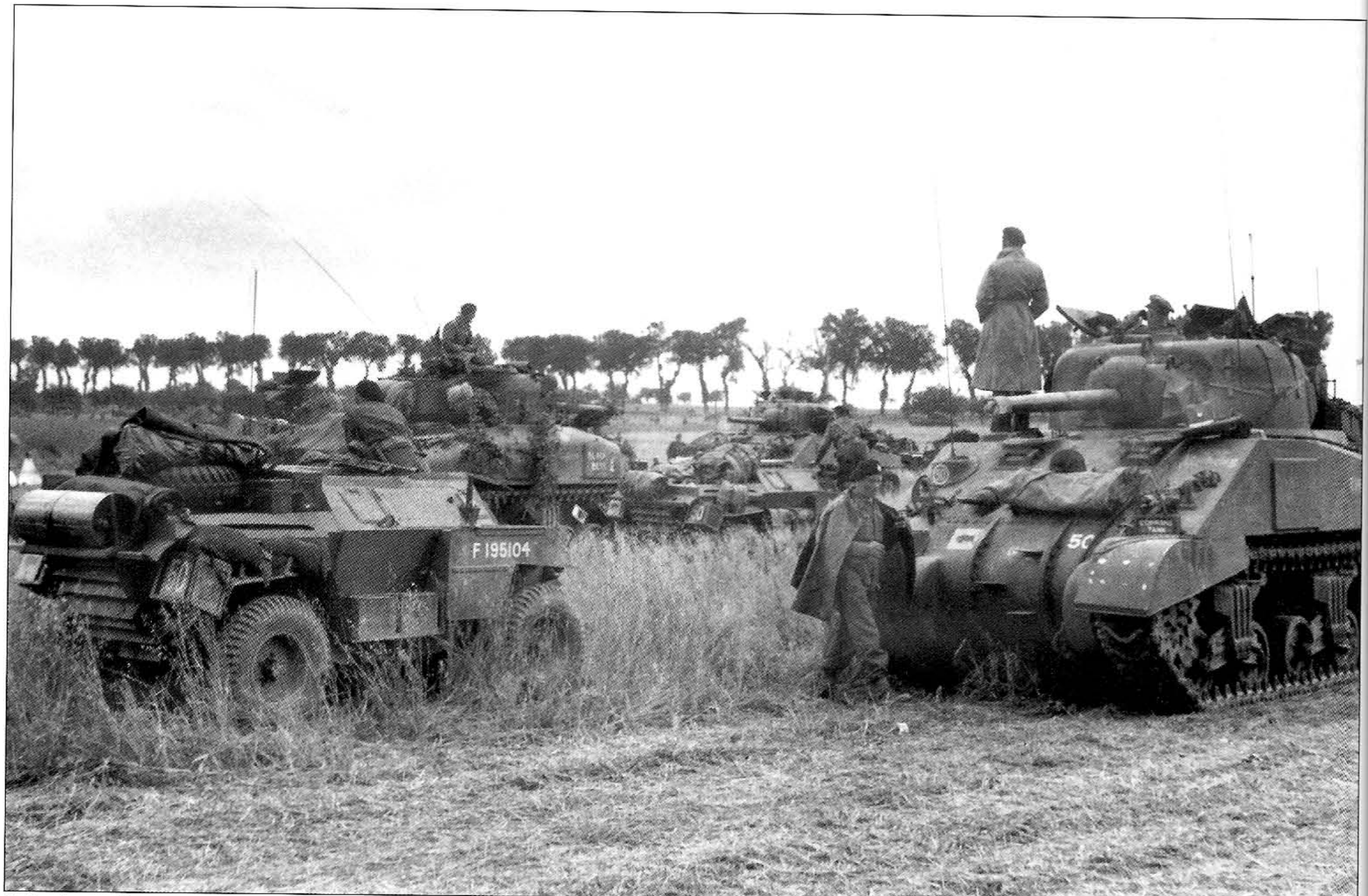




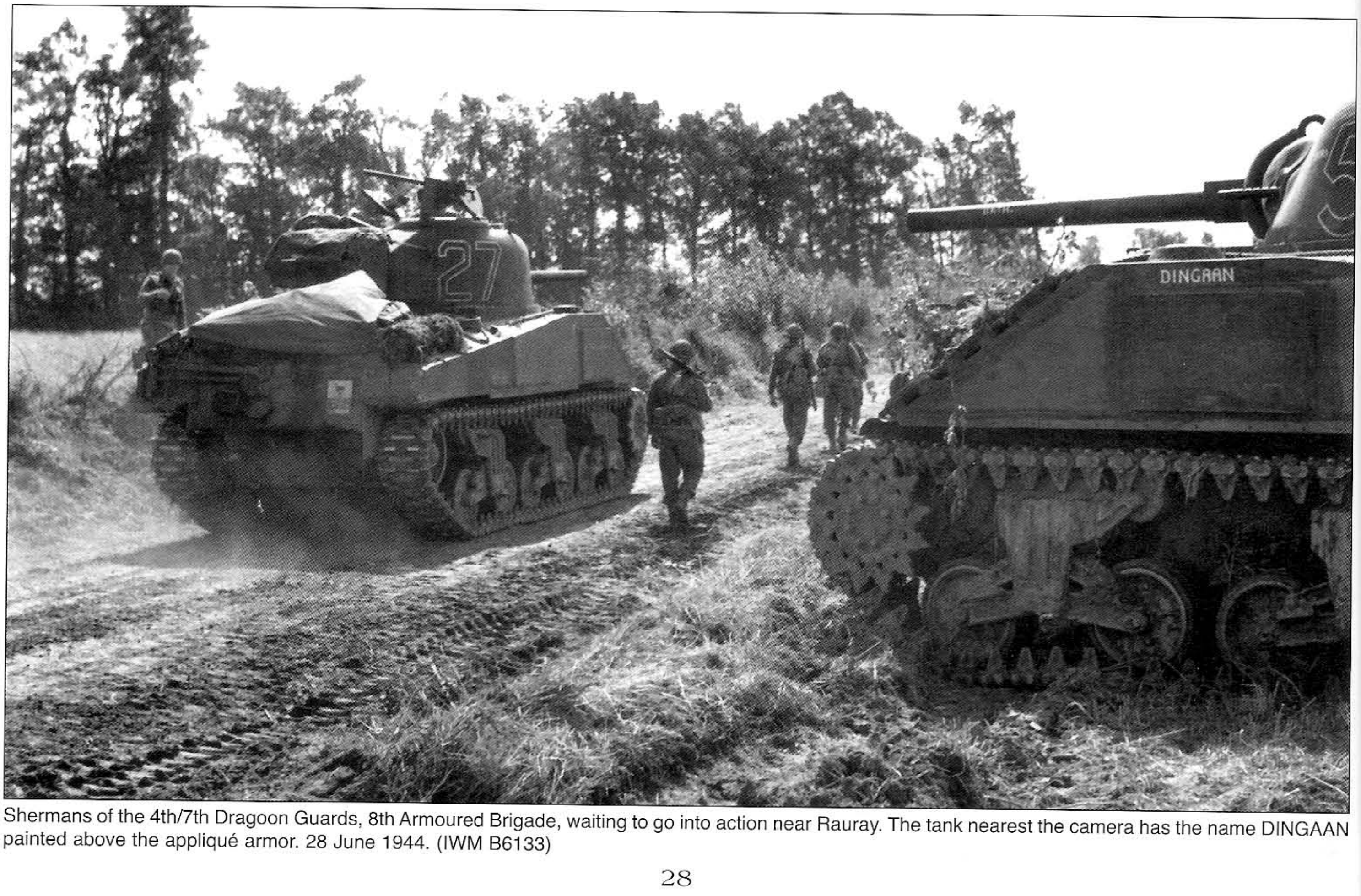
A Sherman DD tank, with flotation screens removed, passing through Douet as engineers work to clear the debris. The official 21st Army Group situation report for June 1944 shows 8th Armoured Brigade as being the only unit equipped with DD tanks based on the Sherman II and other tanks of this brigade also used the system of large, white outlined numbers. 25 June 1944. (IWM B5897)

The official caption of this photo and the one following identifies these tanks as belonging to 29th Armoured Brigade of 11th Armoured Division assembling during Operation Epsom. This identification is however problematic as 11th Armoured Division was, officially at least, equipped throughout with Sherman V's. They may be tanks of 4th Armoured Brigade, the main user of the Sherman II model at this time, operating with 11th Armoured Division. The style of squadron markings is certainly similar to both 3rd County of London Yeomanry and 44th RTR. The tank nearest the camera has the name RUSTLER painted in white between the appliqué armor on the hull. 26 June 1944. (IWM B6018)

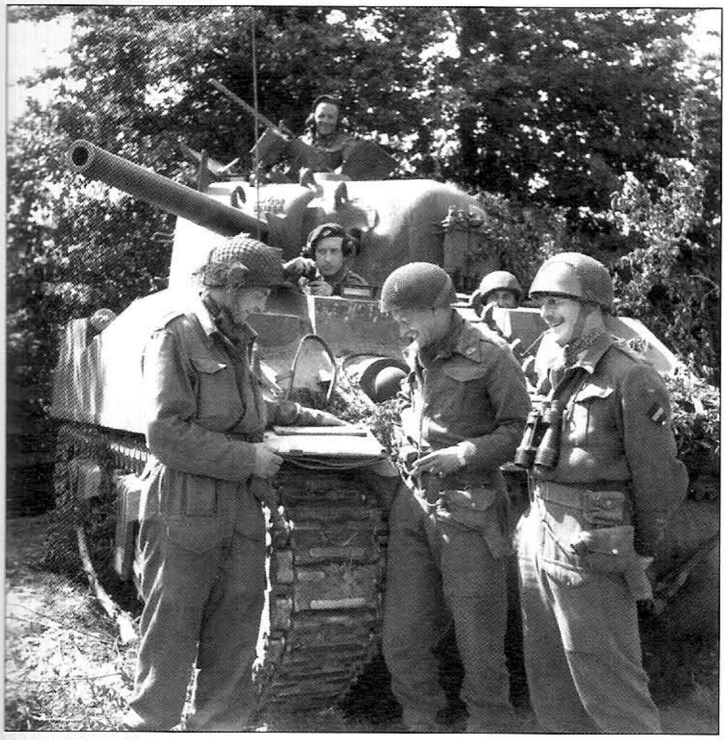




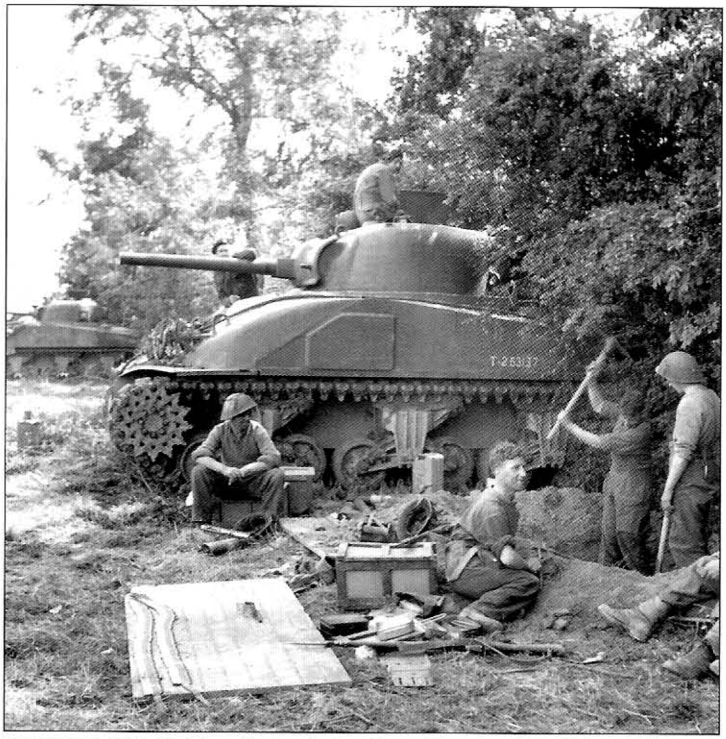
Following on from the previous photo, Sherman II's pass by a command tank and scout cars HQ, 29th Armoured Brigade, 11th Armoured Division. 26 June 1944. (IWM B6019)



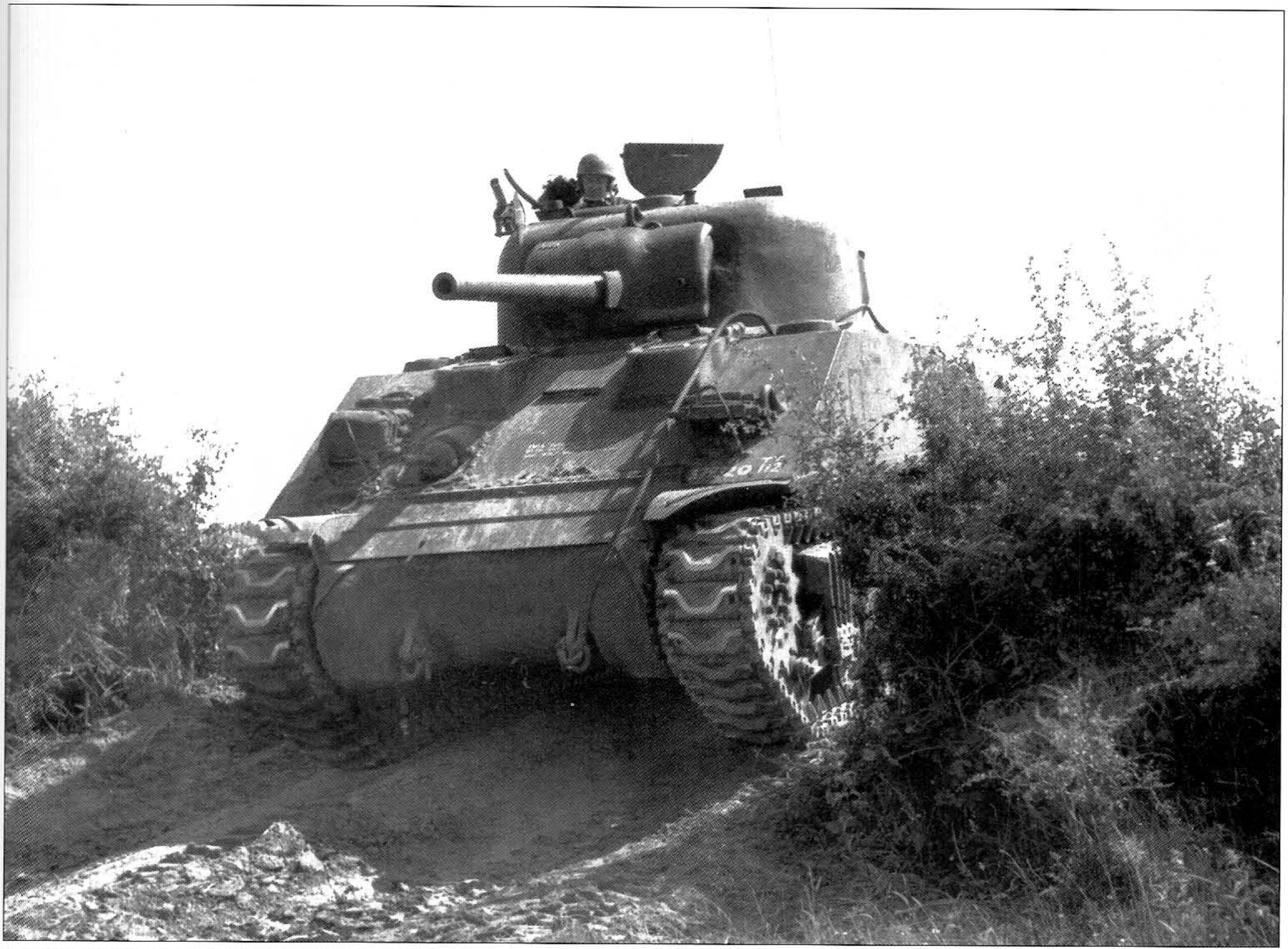
Shermans of the 4th/7th Dragoon Guards, 8th Armoured Brigade, waiting to go into action near Rauray. The tank nearest the camera has the name DINGAAN painted above the appliqué armor. 28 June 1944. (IWM B6133)



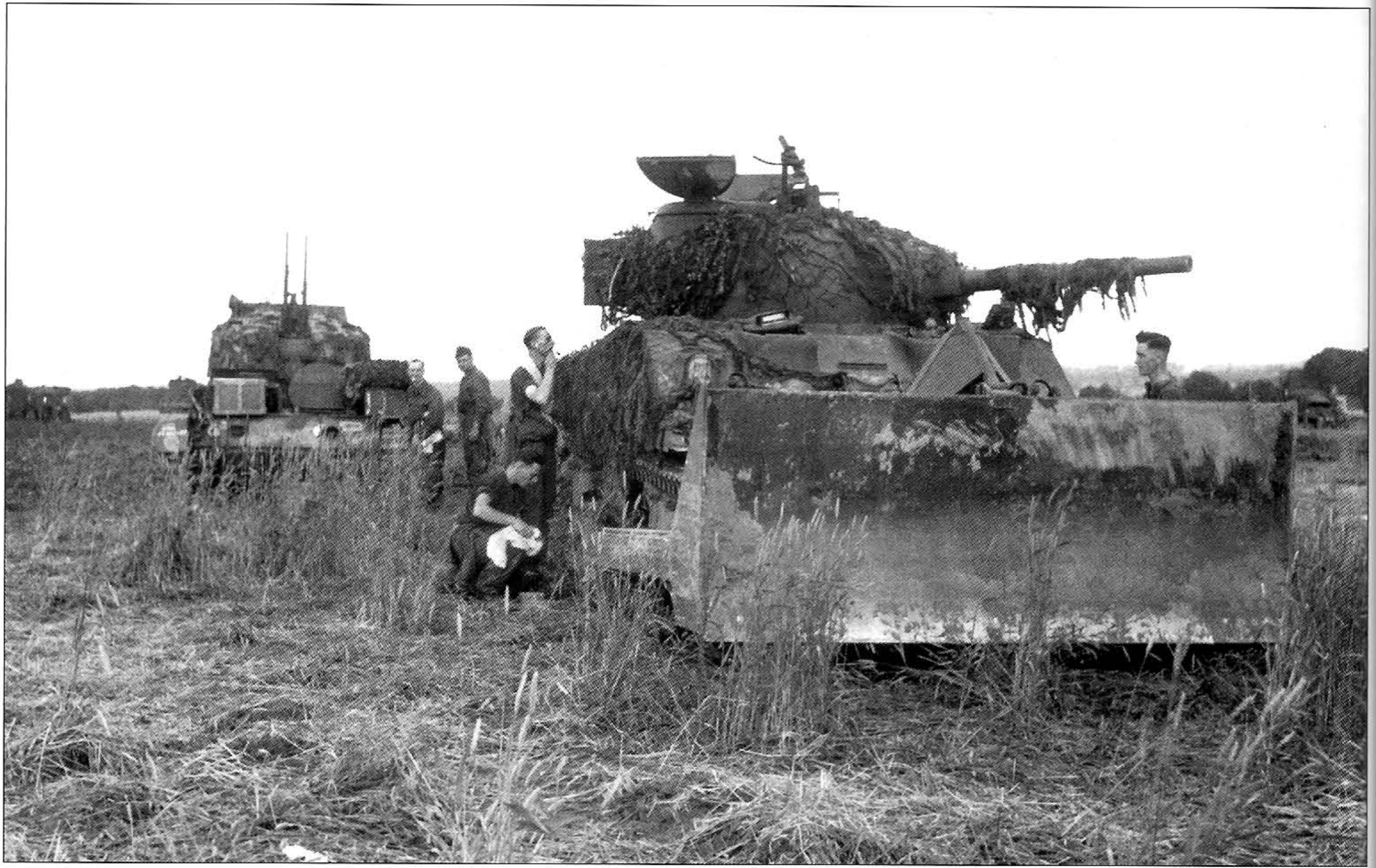
Major W Holtby, commanding C Squadron, East Riding Yeomanry, 27th Armoured Brigade, briefs troop commanders in front of his HQ Sherman tank, 28 June 1944. (IWM B6167)



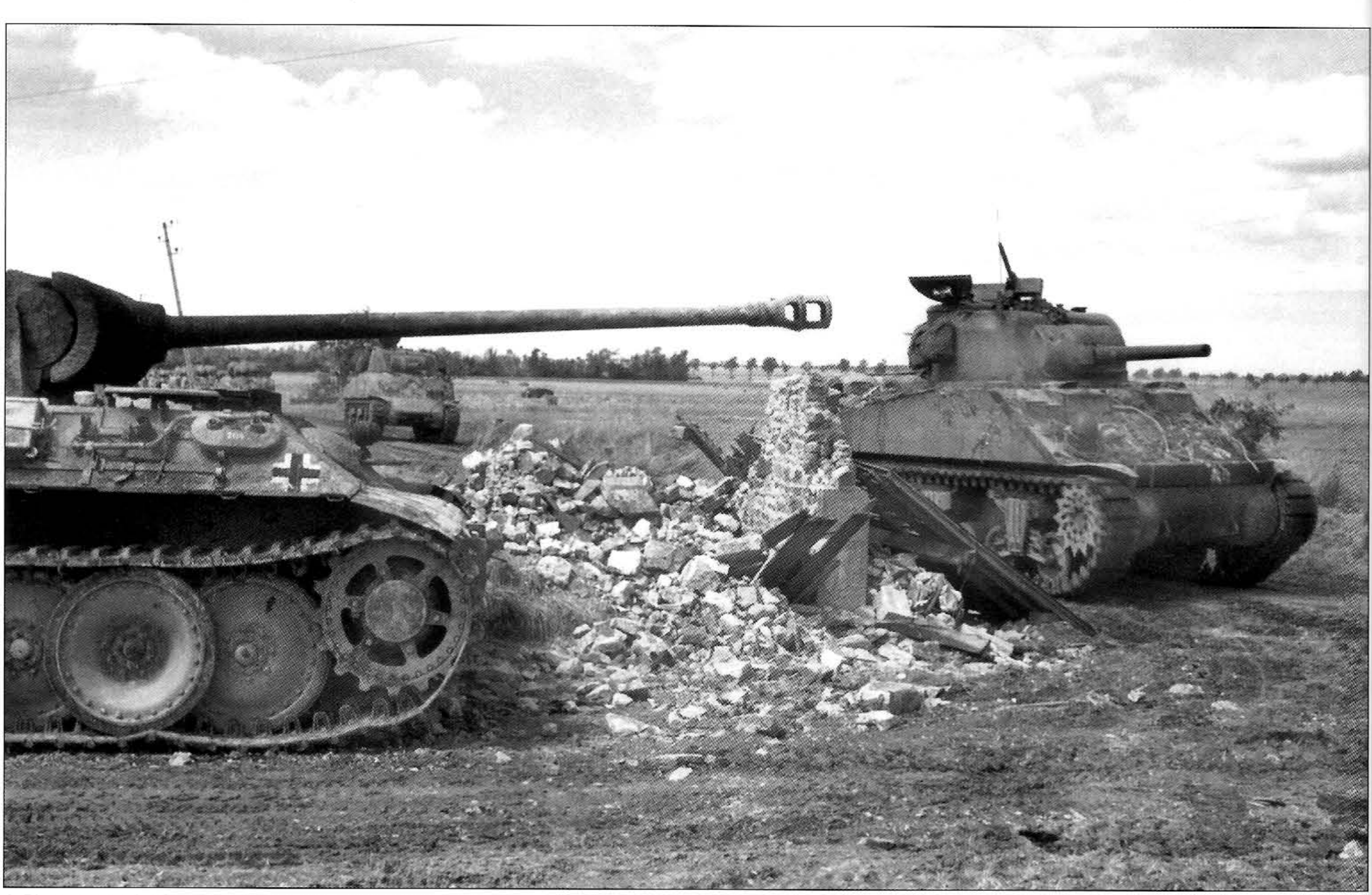
Infantry of 49th Division digging in beside a Sherman Hybrid I near Rauray, 30 June 1944. (IWMB 6225)



A Sherman tank of the East Riding Yeomanry, 27th Armoured Brigade, advances through a gap in a hedge. The 2" bomb thrower has replaced the commander's machinegun and a metal sheet, far too thin to be intended for protection, has been attached to the hull front. 28 June 1944. (IWM B6169)

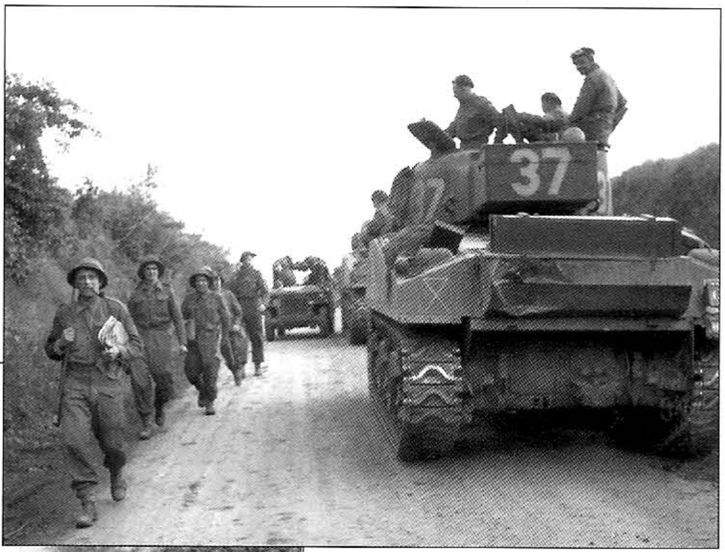


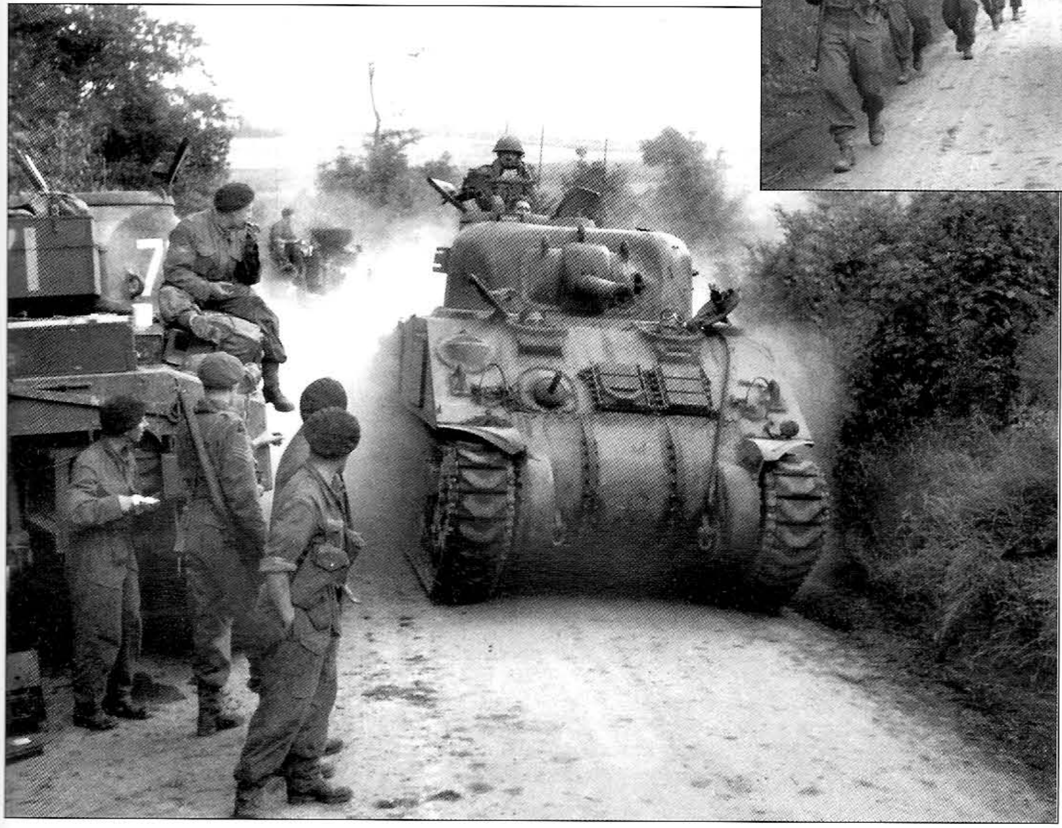
A Sherman dozer tank and Crusader AA Mk III of 2nd Fife and Forfar Yeomanry during Operation Epsom. The camouflage netting was a common site in Normandy. 29 June 1944. (IWM B6187)



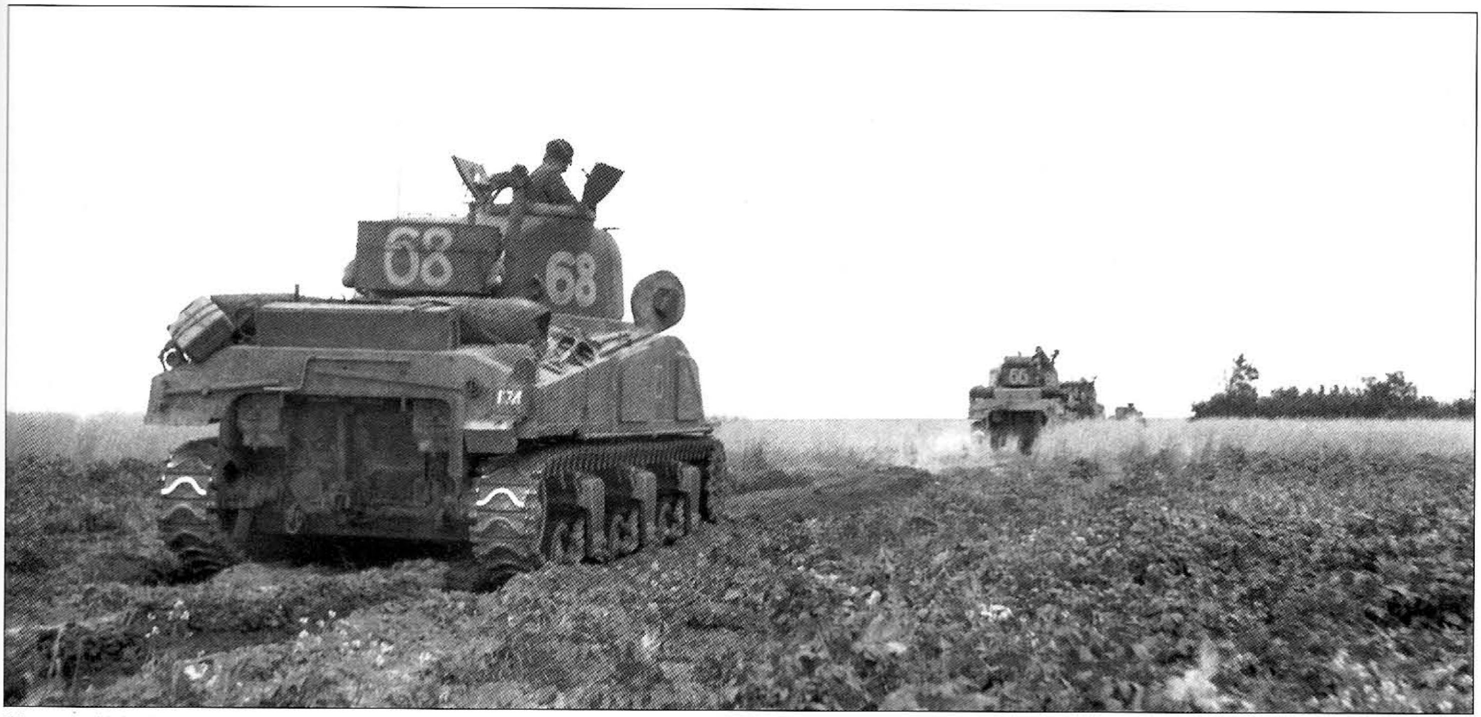
A Sherman tank of 24th Lancers, 8th Armoured Brigade, passing a knocked-out German PzKpfw V Panther tank near Rauray. 30 June 1944. (IWM B6226)

Infantry pass Sherman tanks of 33rd Armoured Brigade near Lebisey Wood, during Operation Charnwood. The brigade's green over black "diablo" can be clearly seen outlined in white. This photo is from a sequence which features 144th Regiment, RAC and this tank is probably also from that regiment. 8 July 1944. (IWM B6639)

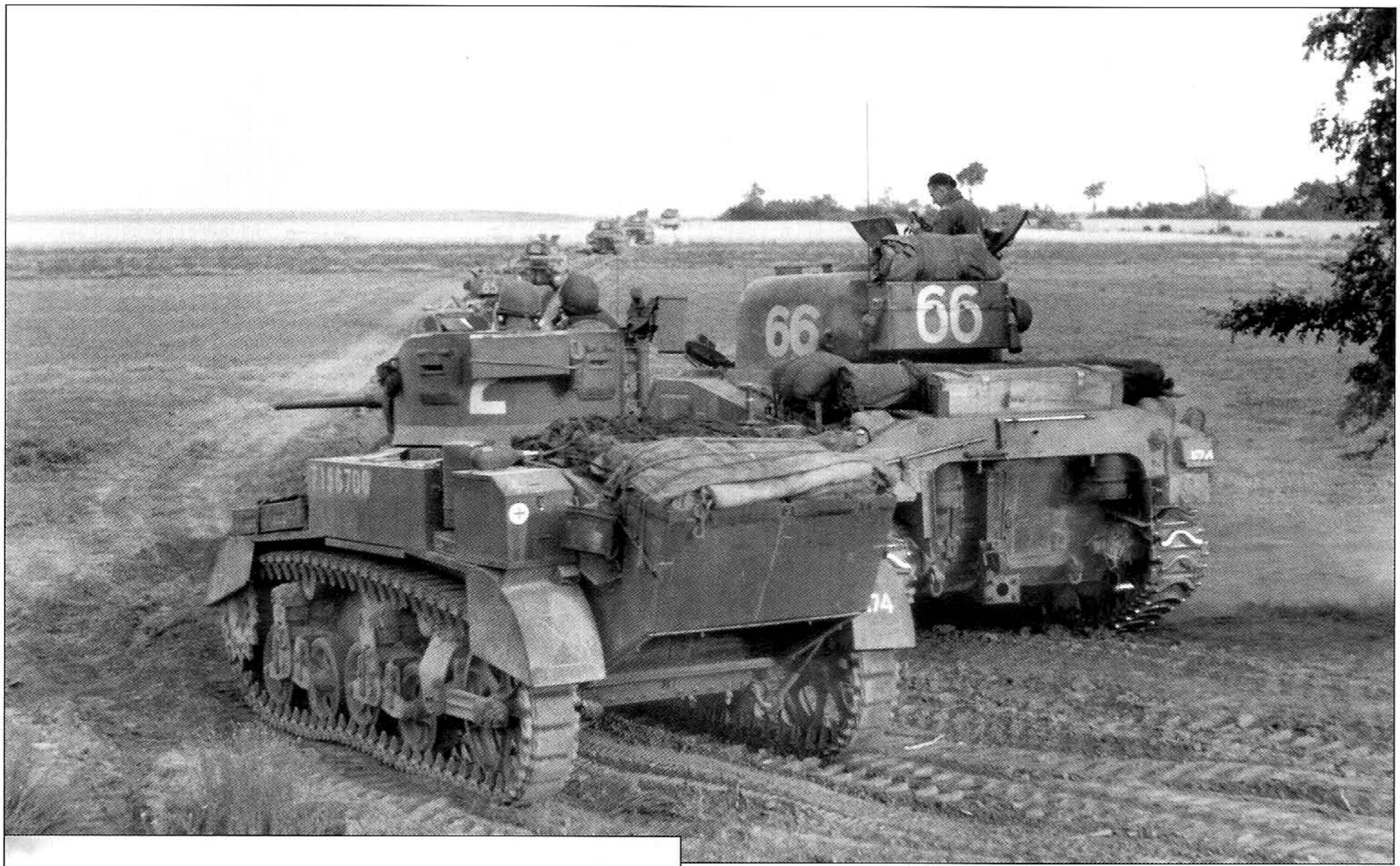




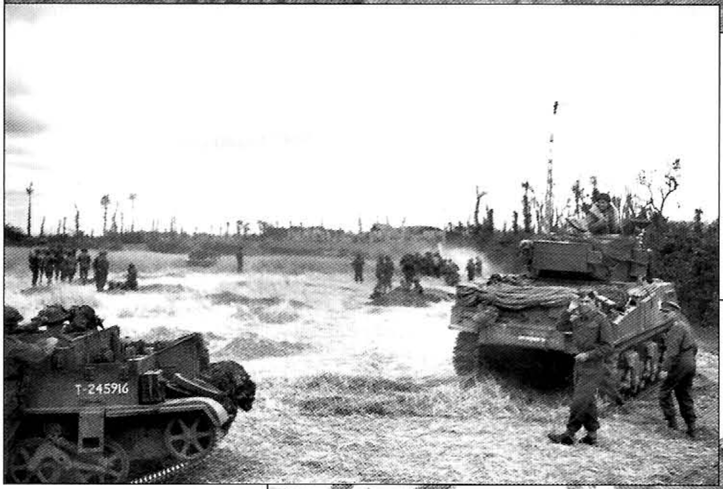
An elderly Sherman command tank passes a column of tanks of 33rd Armoured Brigade, probably 144th RAC, near Lebisey Wood preparing for the assault on Caen. (IWM B6642)



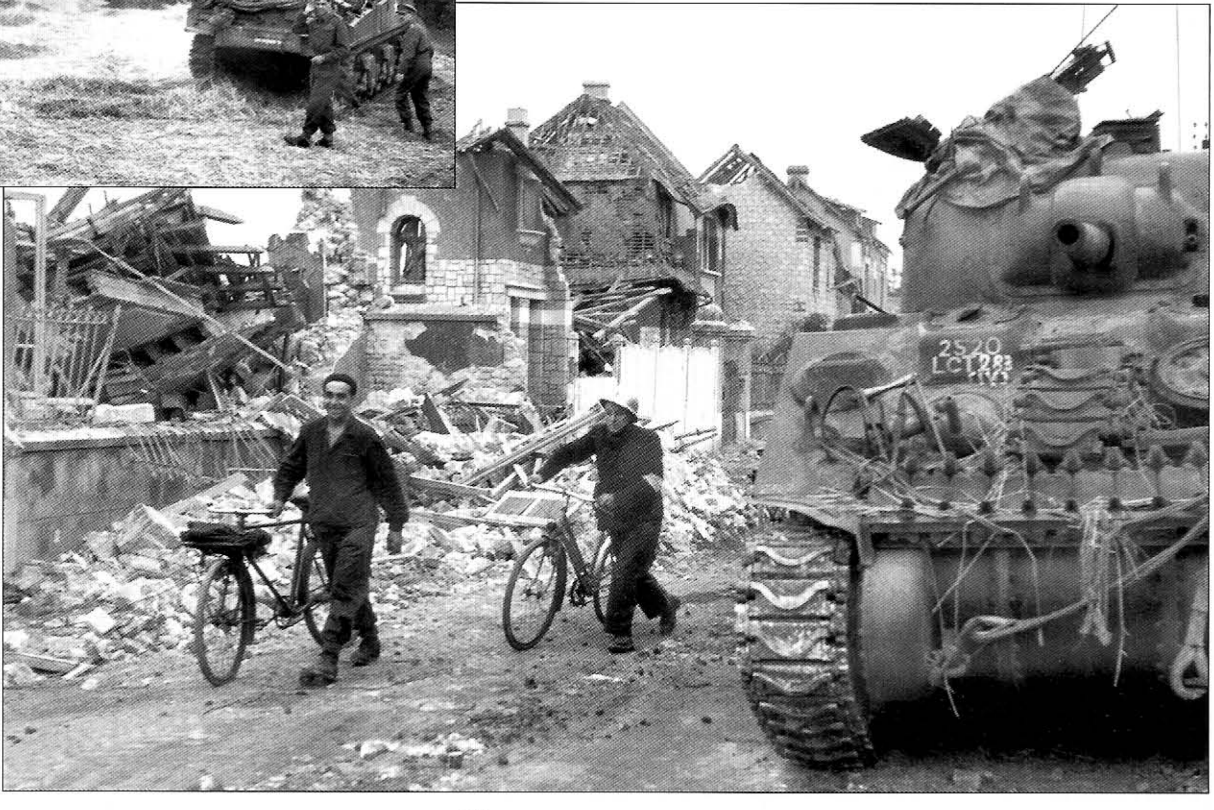
Sherman Hybrid I's of B Squadron, 144th RAC of 33rd Armoured Brigade photographed during Operation Charnwood, the attack on Caen. Unusually for a tank, the AoS sign appears to be carried in a bracket on the hull rear. 8 July 1944. (IWM B6649)



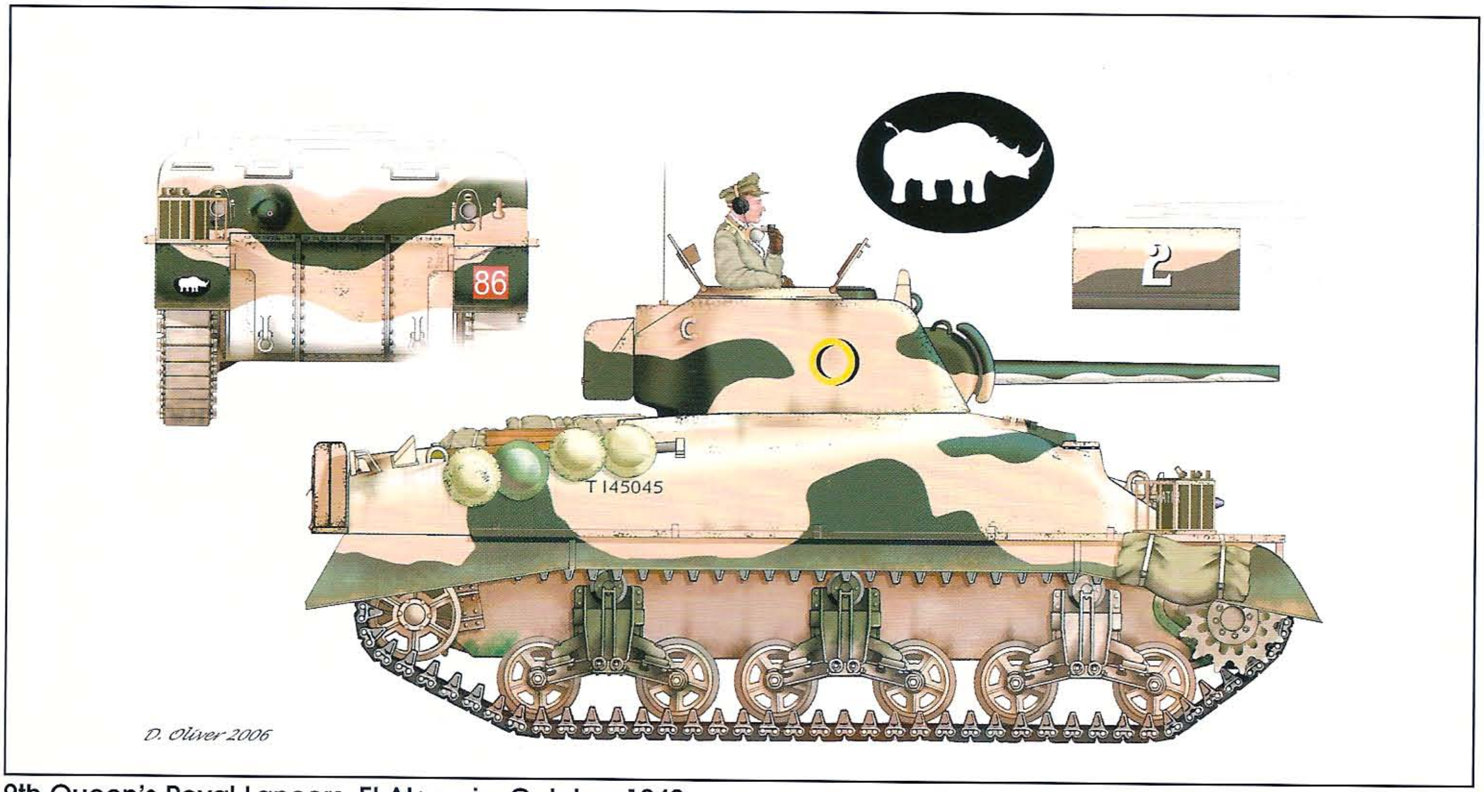
An M3 Honey command tank and Sherman I of 144th RAC, 33rd Armoured Brigade during Operation Charnwood. The AoS sign on both tanks is missing the white underline that would normally denote Corps troops and this seems to be consistent throughout the regiment. 8 July 1944. (IWM B6659)



A Sherman, possibly an Artillery OP, passing Carriers and infantry during Operation Charnwood. 9 July 1944. (IWM B6759)

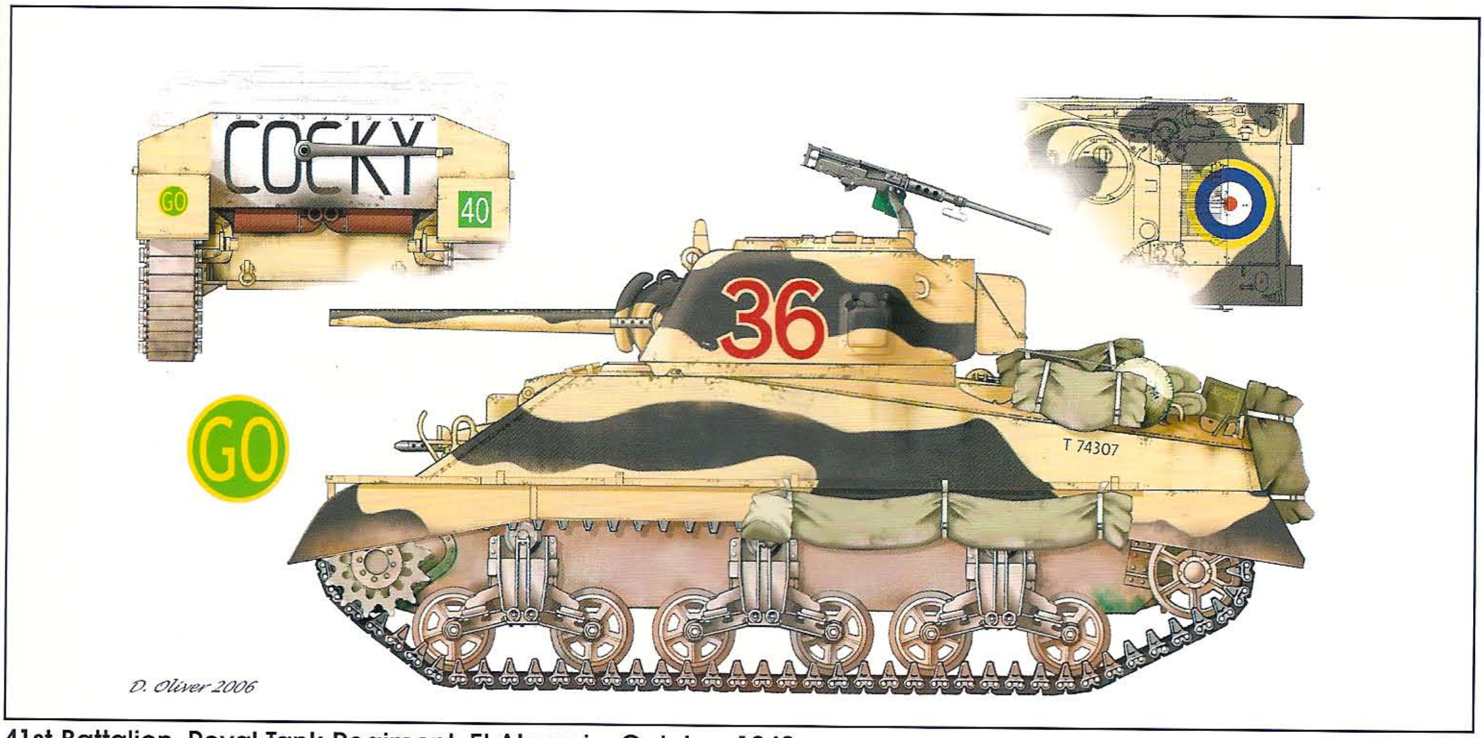


French civilians pass a Sherman tank in the ruins of Caen. 10 July 1944. (IWM B6888)



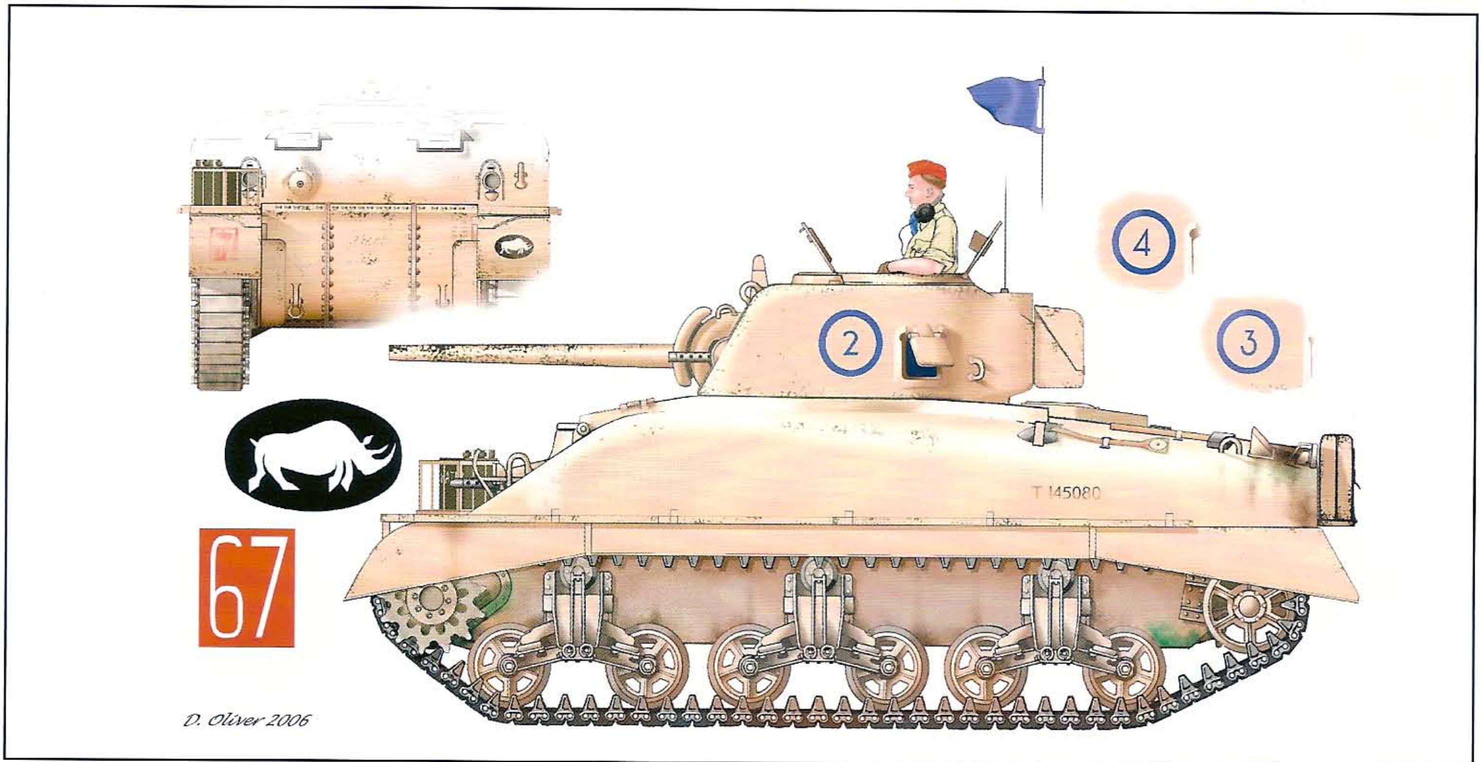
9th Queen's Royal Lancers, El Alamein, October 1942

In mid-October the Lancer's new Shermans were filmed by the Army Film and Photographic Unit (AFPU), the footage later used in the movie "Desert Victory". Particular attention was paid to C Squadron and the near-perfect application of the newly authorised camouflage patterns applied to their tanks. The Sherman II shown here has been painted in a base coat of Desert Pink Z.I. - although Light Stone 61 is a possibility - and Dark (Olive) Green. The shading on the squadron sign may have been peculiar to C Squadron as were the troop numbers carried on the blanket box. The white counter-shading added to the lower hull at the front does not seem to have been used under the main gun as official instructions advised. Some tanks appear to have carried the version of 1st Armoured Division's formation badge shown here while others used the charging variant.

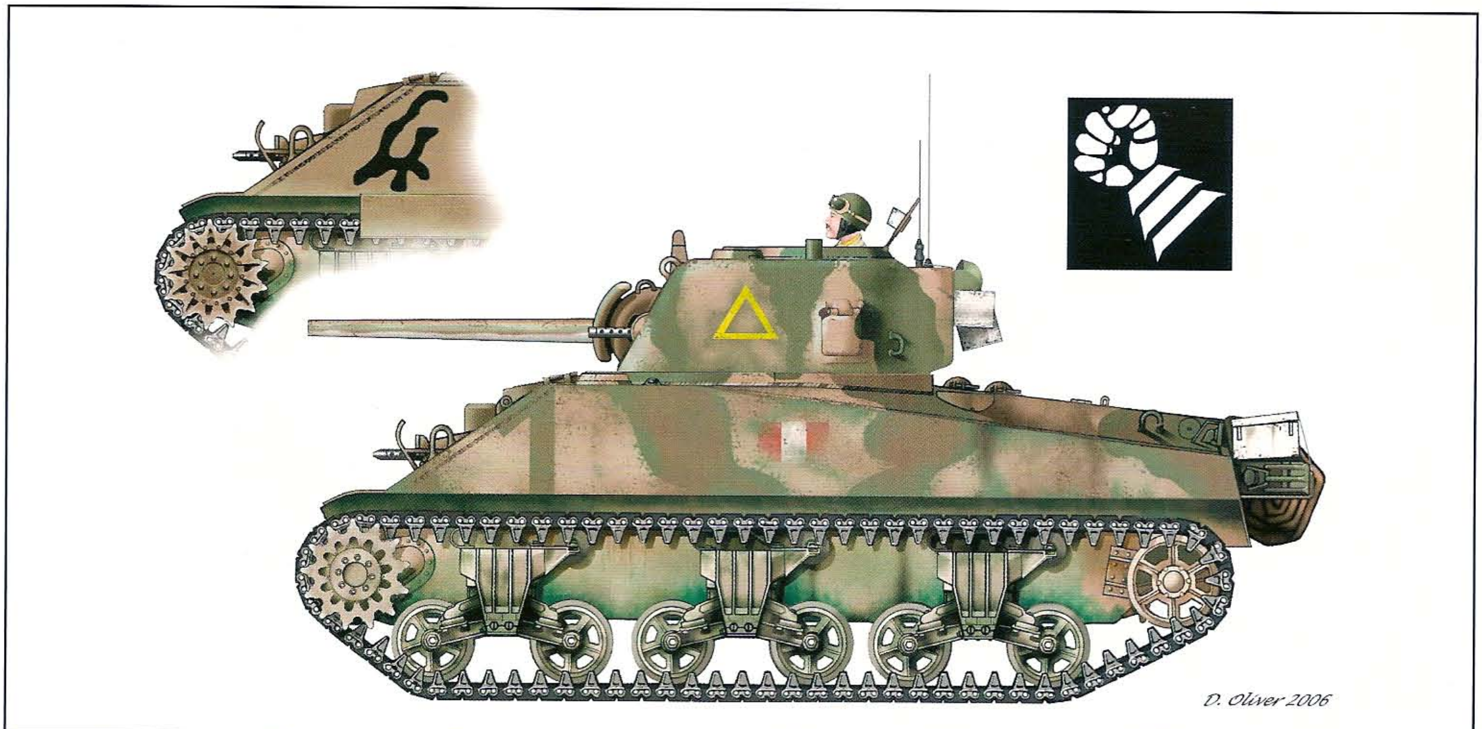


41st Battalion, Royal Tank Regiment, El Alamein, October 1942

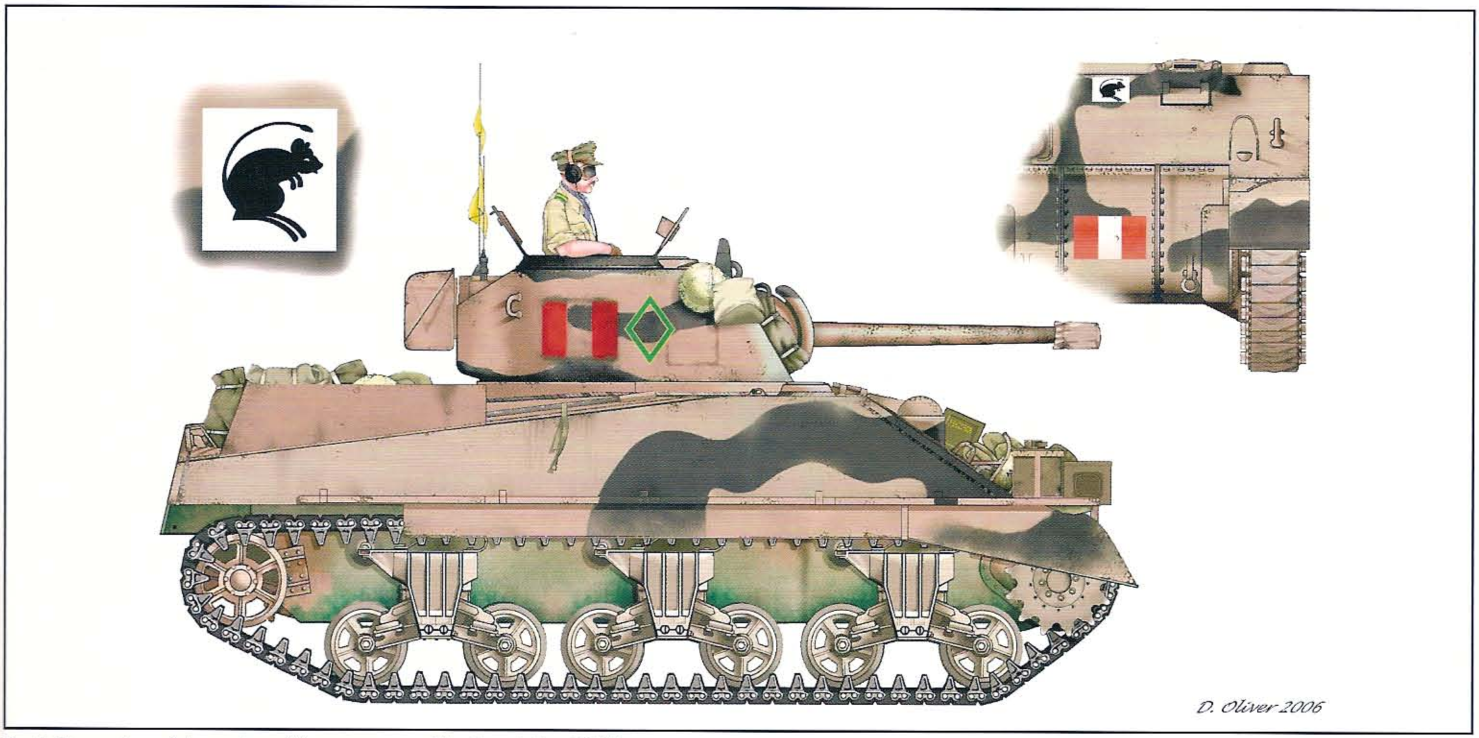
A personal account written by an officer of this battalion recalls that on 12th October the tanks were painted in what he described as " ...a mess of ochre and black paint....." and are therefore shown here in a base color of Light Stone 61 and Black. The large call-sign numbers on the turret side were a feature of 41st RTR tanks and were of a decidedly darker shade than the disruptive camouflage – they are shown here as red. Note that the numbers have not been outlined in a lighter color, as is often shown, but that the painter has carefully avoided each number. All the tanks of this battalion were named to correspond with the squadron letter, the names displayed in large black letters on the hull rear – possibly on a white background. Although attached to 10th Armoured Division for the battle, 24th Armoured Brigade retained their old 8th Armoured Division badge, albeit with yellow lettering and the green AoS sign system of a junior brigade within an armored division. This Sherman III, COCKY, was the battalion's first casualty of the battle.



10th Royal Hussars, Libya, November 1942
Filmed during the start of Operation Supercharge in early November 1942, this Sherman II is typical of replacements received during the El Alamein Offensive in having no disruptive camouflage at all. The traditional color of the 10th Hussars was blue (they were coincidentally the junior regiment in this brigade) and a small blue flag is being flown here from the top of the wireless aerial. Pennants and flags were a common, indeed indispensable, feature of British tanks in the Western Desert. Flown in various arrangements - usually at top or middle - and in different combinations they provided quick identification of friendly forces over considerable distances. Shown here is the division's formation badge in its charging incarnation - note that the oval background is not as rounded as that shown for the 9th Lancer's. The style of number used for the AoS sign is typical of that seen in North Africa. Most Shermans at this time were fitted with the reversible Rubber Block tracks shown here although the WE210 track, better known as Double I tracks, can also be seen.

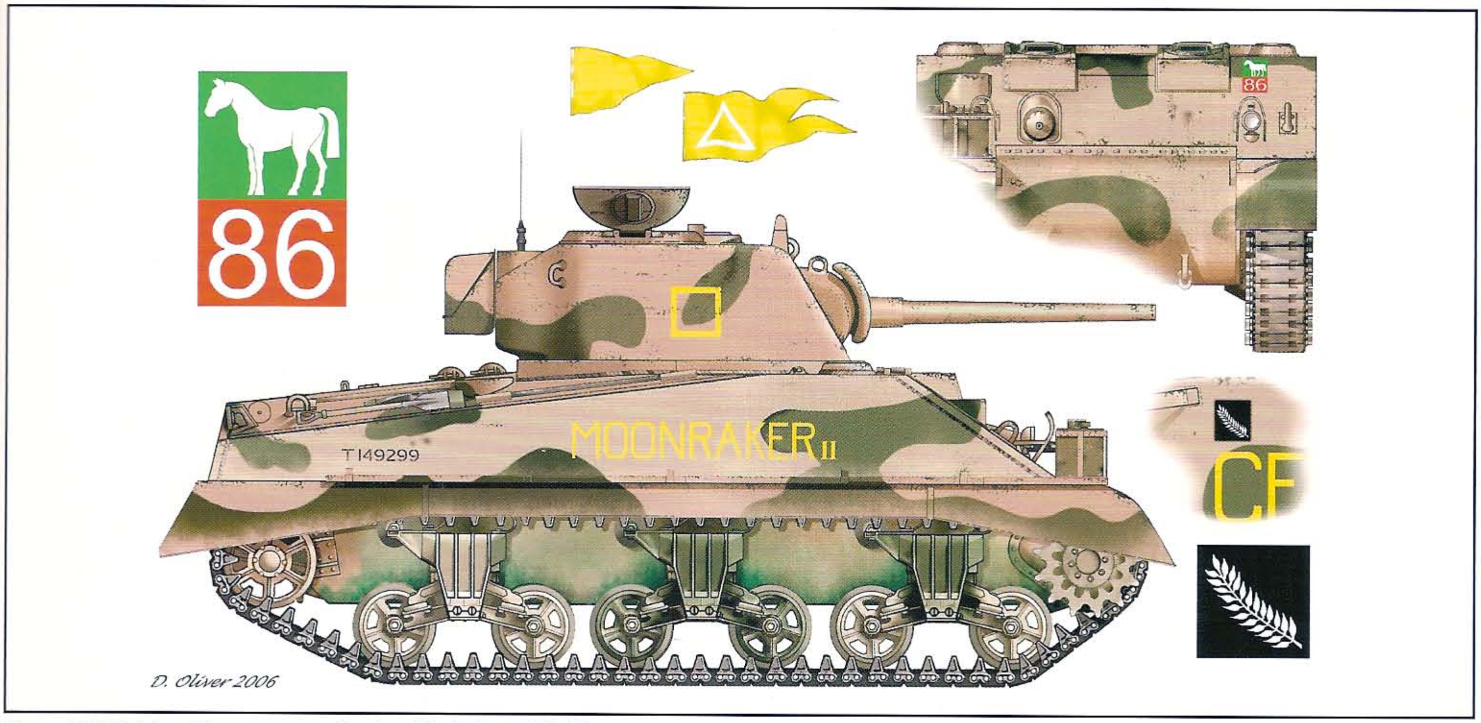


17th/21st Lancers, Tunisia, April 1943
After exchanging their Valentines and Crusaders for Shermans the Lancer's, together with the other regiments of 26th Armoured Brigade, were thrown at the Axis defenses at Fondouk in Tunisia on 7 April 1943. In this day's action alone 17th /21st Lancers lost 32 of their tanks. The Sherman III shown here is depicted in its original US Olive Drab with a disruptive pattern of light Mud - as officially authorized for Lend-lease vehicles at this time. The camouflage seems to have been applied after the squadron sign and red/white/red recognition marking which is partially obscured. The number 1 at the front of the hull is far too regular to have been made by accident and is in fact typical of the application of 26th Armoured Brigade's markings - which could range from unusual to bizarre. Both these numbers indicate troops. No formation badges or AoS signs were carried in North Africa - the 1st Armoured Division's Mailed Fist is shown here only as a matter of interest.



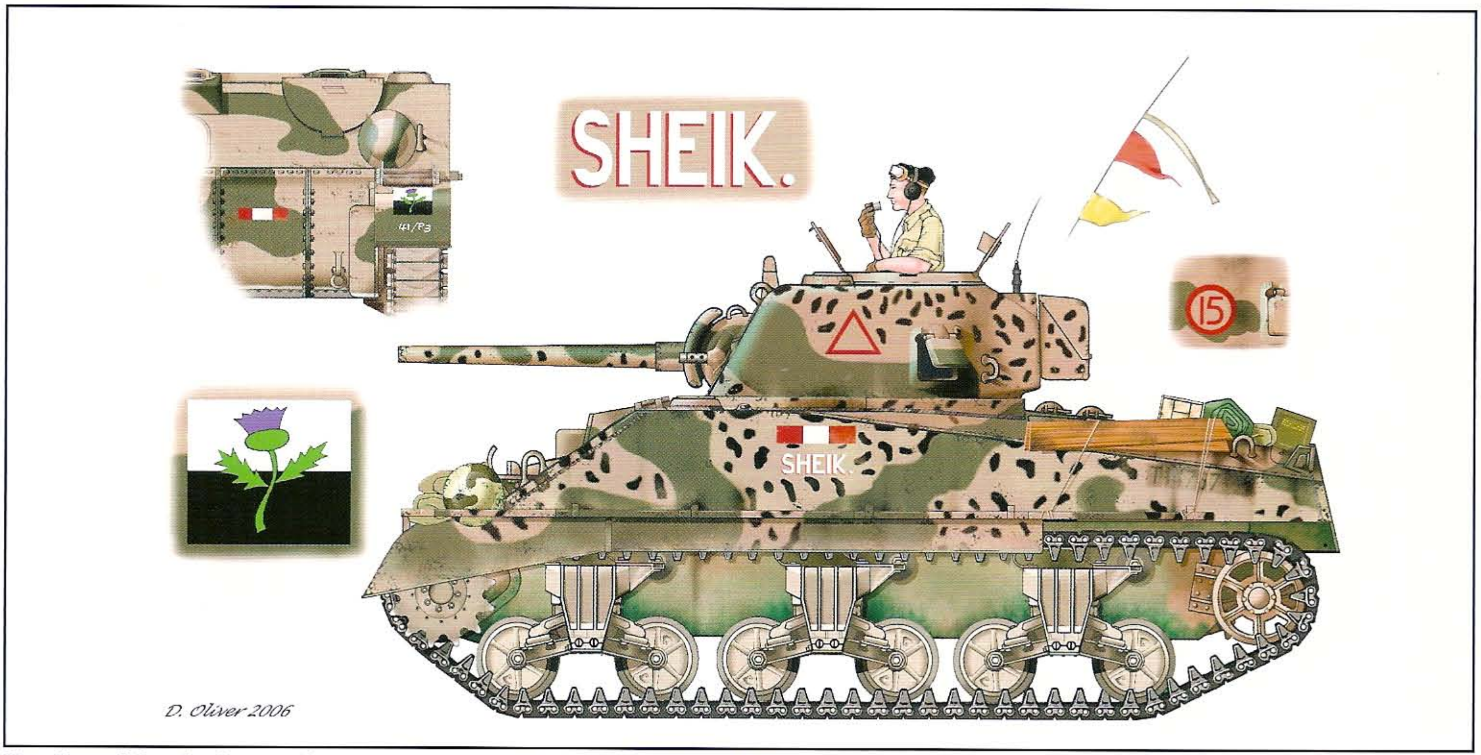
3rd County of London Yeomanry, Sicily, July 1943

Shown here is the Sherman III of Major Allan Grant the regiment's second in command. When the Sharpshooter's CO was killed by a sniper's bullet during the fighting for Primisole Bridge on 17 July 1943, Major Grant assumed command and this may account for the patchy nature of the vehicle's markings. In the photograph on which this illustration is based the contrast between the two camouflage colors is not great however there is evidence to show that the regiment's tanks were painted in a Light Mud and Black scheme before leaving North Africa. Although the HQ squadron sign is usually depicted as red with a yellow surround there is no evidence to confirm what colors were used and it is shown here in the green and yellow of the Sharpshooters. The recognition marking painted behind the squadron sign is devoid of its usual white center. The front view shows the markings typical of this regiment during the Sicilian campaign and the brigade's famous Black Jerboa formation badge.



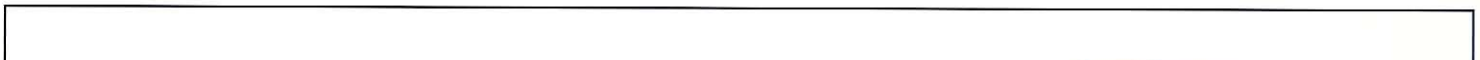
Royal Wiltshire Yeomanry, Syria, October 1943

After the El Alamein offensive 9th Armoured Brigade was withdrawn to Syria to refit and rest. There, the brigade was completely equipped with Shermans. These tanks have at many times been shown in a camouflage scheme of sand and red, the red shade sometimes being referred to as Terra Cotta. Although the latter is listed in the Standard and was in use until 1940, there is no absolutely no evidence to support the use of such a scheme. The April 1943 order authorizing the use of Light Mud and Black or Dark Green applied to all units of Middle East Command. All three of the brigade's regiments named their tanks - the Wiltshire Yeomanry took the names of public houses of Wiltshire and painted them in the yellow of the second senior regiment. At some time, quite probably before just El Alamein, the brigade was granted the privilege of wearing the white on black formation badge of the 2nd New Zealand Division – although this tank, a Sherman III, does not. Command pennants were used – a small triangular pennant for troop commander and a larger, swallowtail pennant for squadron commander. The combination formation badge of 9th Armoured Brigade and AoS sign are also shown.



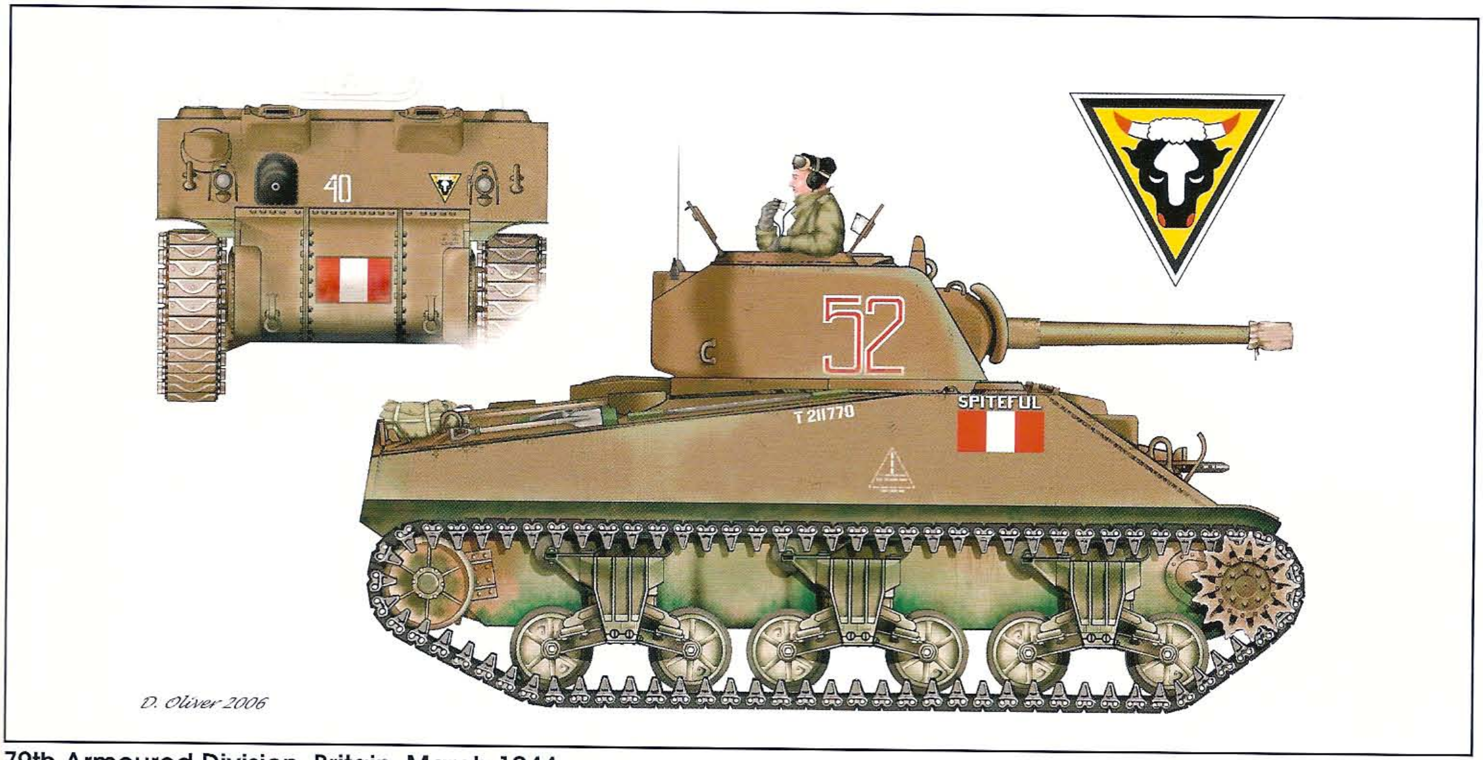
The Royal Scots Greys (2nd Dragoons), Italy, September 1943

At some time after their arrival in Italy at Salerno the Grey's applied this unique camouflage of black dots to some, but certainly not all, their Shermans. On close inspection of the available photos the "dots" are in fact more kidney-shaped and look to have been sprayed on. The application varies from seemingly random to something approaching a herringbone pattern. The Grey's had been operating as an independent regiment since late 1942 although officially part of 4th Armoured Brigade. During that time, it is not clear exactly when, they began to use the formation badge seen here – a black over white square with a green and purple thistle. It is doubtful that this badge was used after the Italian campaign. All tanks carried a red squadron sign on the turret, some with troop number enclosed. They were also named, probably after RN ships, with the style of lettering differing from one vehicle to another. The name shown on this Sherman III, SHEIK, has been painted in a very accomplished style – the white letters featuring a red drop-shadow. Note the continued use of aerial pennants – the colors shown here being purely conjectural.



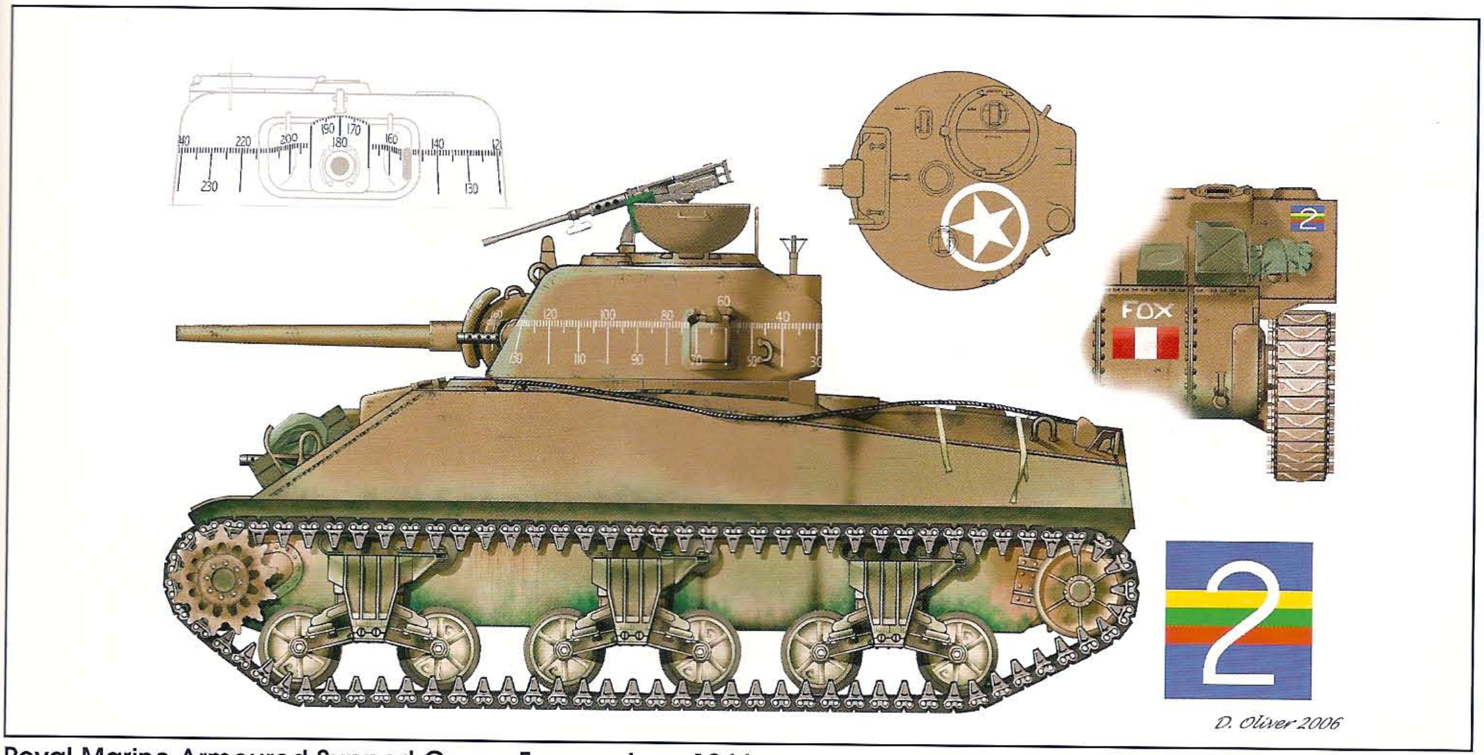
46th Battalion, Royal Tank Regiment, Italy, January 1944

This battalion, alone of 23rd Armoured Brigade's regiments, landed with the British force at Anzio. For the initial landing waterproofing was used extensively, notably on the main gun and hull machinegun, and a wading trunk attached to the rear hull. These were very quickly removed once the tank reached dry land, the lower part of the wading trunk however being a more permanent fixture was usually left in place as is seen here. The brigade's formation sign of a black Liver Bird on a white background symbolised its connection to the city of Liverpool but is now far more simplified than the version worn in North Africa. Also of note is the style of numbering used for the AoS sign, the number 86 being confirmed by photographs. The remains of what appear to be Light Mud patches on the Olive Drab base coat are still visible as are what may be shipping markings on either side of the WD number.



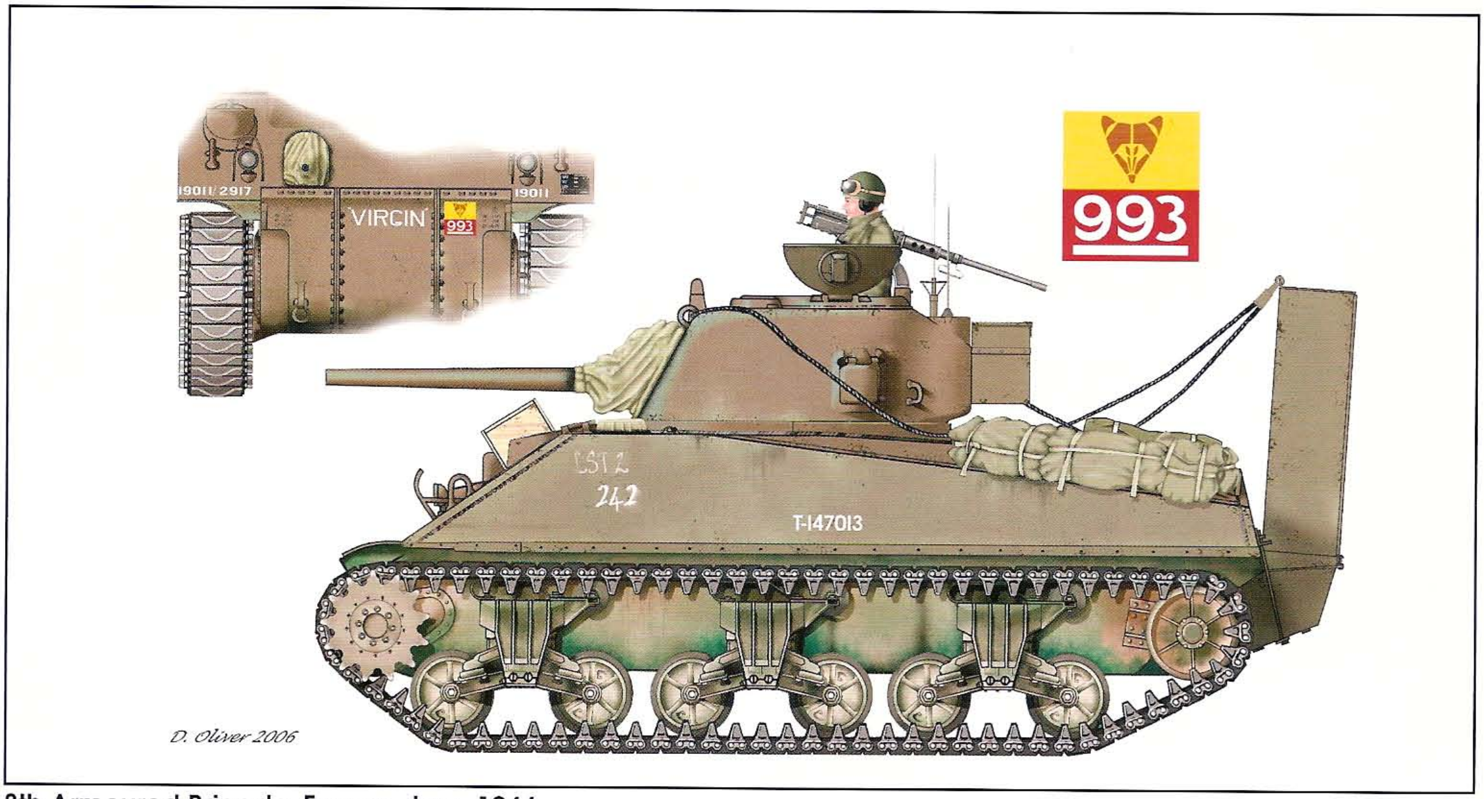
79th Armoured Division, Britain, March 1944

This Sherman I of Division HQ was photographed demonstrating the effectiveness of one of the division's Churchill ARK's. Its almost pristine condition is representative of tanks seen in Britain at this time training for the Normandy landings. The red/white/red recognition marking was introduced for units in Britain in early 1942, the regulation dimensions being 10 inches in height with each band being 6 inches wide. Apparently the colors were supposed to be reversed in ME Command but this was never implemented and the same marking was used in both theaters. Its use was officially discontinued by the spring of 1944 and it was rarely seen in Northern Europe. The large call sign on the turret side may be merely a white outline but does seem to be a slightly darker shade than the base color in the original photo. The AoS sign is unusual in only displaying the number 40, indicating division HQ, without its background of a black rectangle. The division's distinctive formation badge was carried by most of its vehicles.



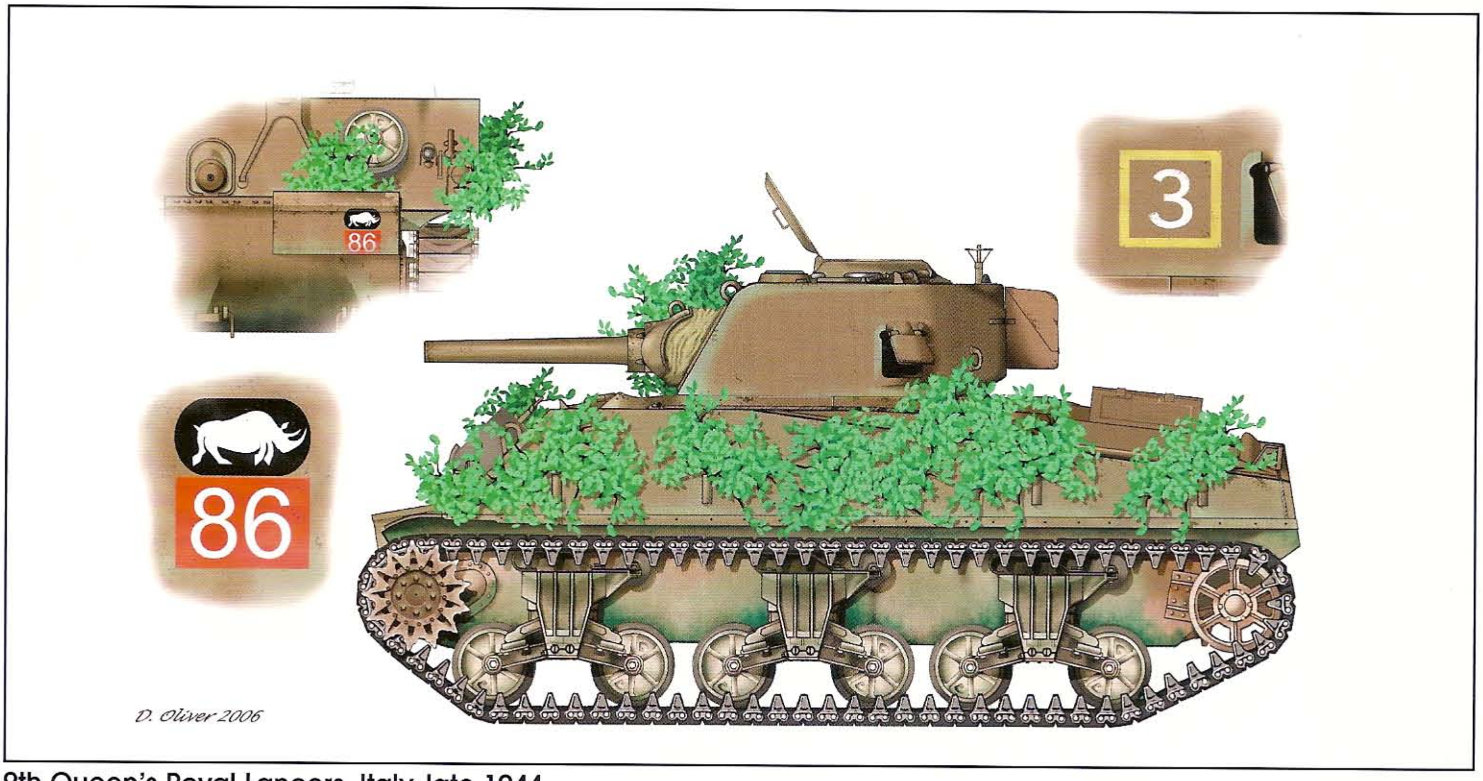
Royal Marine Armoured Support Group, France, June 1944

For the Normandy landings the Royal Marines were equipped with Centaurs armed with the 95mm Howitzer and Sherman tanks, the latter to be used as command and control vehicles. The original intention was for the tanks to provide fire support, firing from landing craft while still at sea. It was however later decided, at Montgomery's personal insistence, that the tanks should follow the Marines ashore. The Sherman V shown here has the distinctive compass rose used by this unit painted in white numbers around the turret – note that the calibrations continue across the gun mount. A crew member standing outside the turret was able to direct the tank's fire by lining up the numbers with the target. The name FOX, indicating F Battery, and a red/white/red recognition marking are painted on the transmission cover. Also shown is the aerial recognition sign of a five-pointed star - authorised in April 1944 and intended to replace the RAF-style roundel – and the colorful AoS sign of the Armoured Support Regiments.



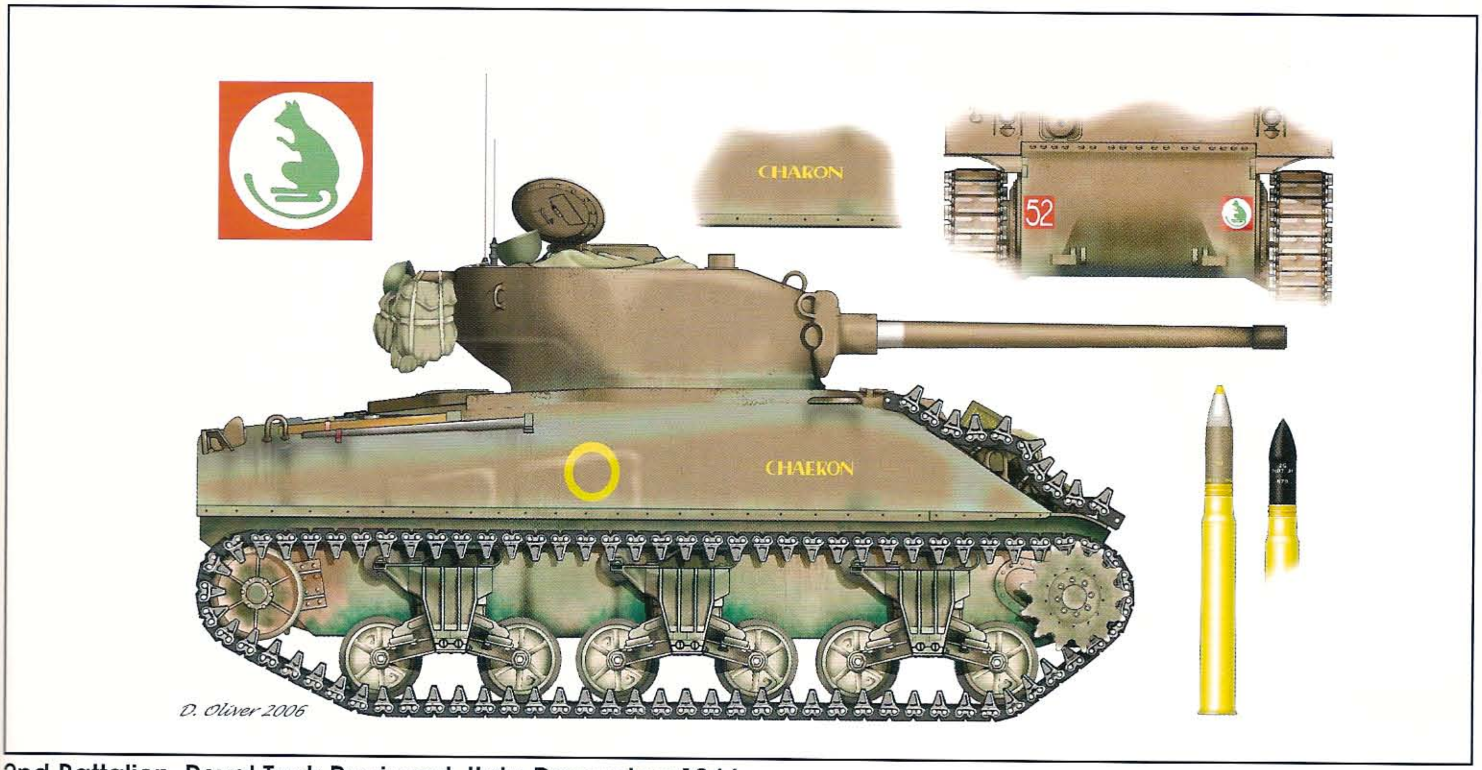
8th Armoured Brigade, France, June 1944

This tank, from Brigade HQ, came ashore on the first day of the invasion and is shown here as it left the landing craft. The canvas waterproofing to the main gun, machinegun and ventilators can be seen here – a black, waterproof sealant was liberally applied around all the joins. The wading trunk was supported by cables running to the rear of the turret and could be released by a catch next to the turret cupola. Instructions and identification marks for the use of the landing ships are applied, in chalk, on the hull side and more permanently on the hull front next to the headlights. The brigade's well known Fox Face formation badge with the combined AoS sign of brigade HQ - the regiments using 994, 995 and 996 in an identical configuration - has been painted onto the transmission cover to the right of the name VIRGIN.



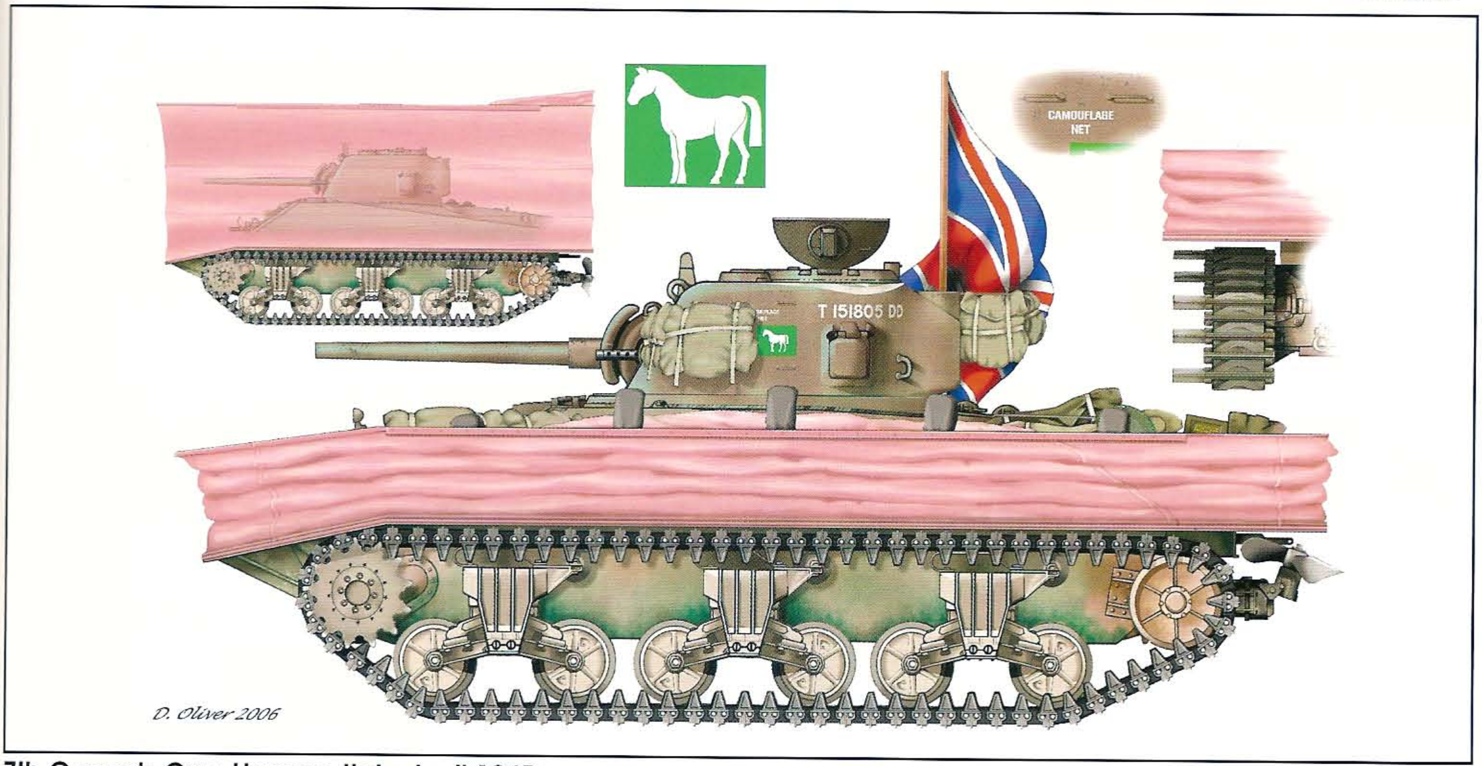
9th Queen's Royal Lancers, Italy, late 1944

Armed with a 105mm Howitzer, the Sherman IB was used by the armored brigades employed in Italy, the first deliveries being attached to squadron HQ's and used in the close support role. The 1st Armoured Division formation badge and AoS sign, a white 86 on a red square denoting the second senior regiment, have been painted onto a toolbox that is welded to the front of the hull. The Charging Rhino badge, no longer an oval, now has the upper and lower edge squared off. There is evidence to suggest that at least some of these tanks carried squadron signs with a troop number enclosed on the turret side. The use of foliage as camouflage by British tanks was quite a common site in Italy – roads bordered by orchards and olive groves provided ideal cover for German anti-tank gunners while severely restricting the view from the commander's cupola.



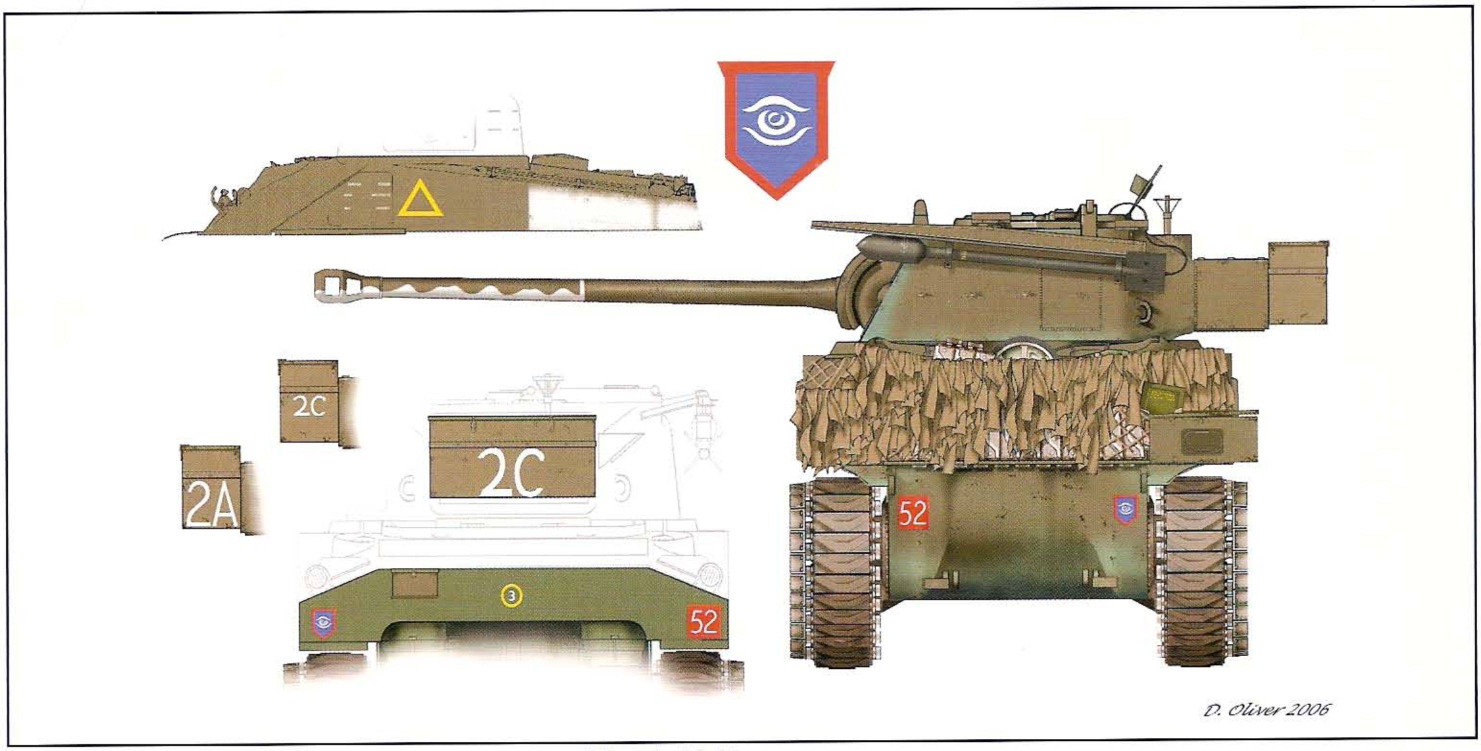
2nd Battalion, Royal Tank Regiment, Italy, December 1944

At this time the battalion was the senior within 7th Armoured Brigade – 7th Hussars having left in late September 1944 - but seems to have retained its yellow squadron insignia on this Sherman IIA. That the date is correct is confirmed by the owner of the photograph and by 15th Army Group situation reports which show that at 23 September there were no Sherman IIA as yet on hand with formations. The name is taken from a list supplied by an ex-member of 2nd RTR who is sadly no longer living. In the list the spelling is given as CHARON but a possible alternative spelling may be CHAERON, the last four letters being visible just to the right of the standing crew member. As we may never know I have shown both here and will leave it to the reader to decide. The brigade's Green Rat formation badge is depicted as photographic evidence shows it to be worn at this time – within a white circle on a red square. Also illustrated are the HE Shell at left and AP shot as used with the 76mm main gun.



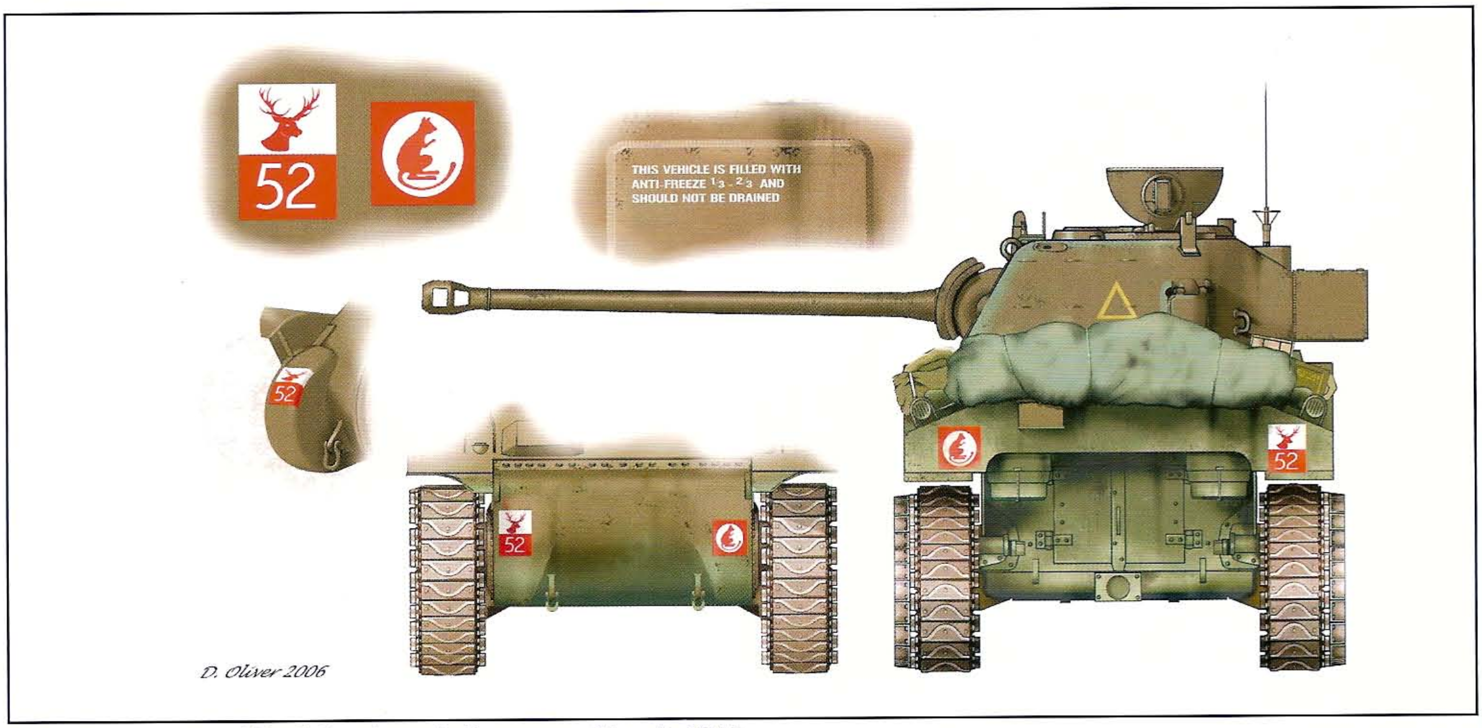
7th Queen's Own Hussars, Italy, April 1945

The Hussars were detached from 7th Armoured Brigade in September 1944 to train with DD tanks – at first Valentines and then Shermans. Shown here is a DD (Duplex Drive) Sherman III of B Squadron photographed in the Piazzale Roma in Venice when the brigade entered the town on 30 April 1945. The formation badge of 9th Armoured Brigade is carried here, unusually but logically, on the turret side just in front of the pistol port. Above that can be seen the notation CAMOUFLAGE NET in small white letters. Just visible on the turret roof, under a thick coating of dust and mud, is a five-pointed white star enclosed in a circle. The WD Number, also painted on the hull, is clearly visible. The large Union Jack adds a touch of color. The screen is shown here in both its raised and lowered states – note the position of the propeller in each. Also shown are the extended end connectors, more commonly known as Platypus grousers, attached to the Rubber Chevron tracks. Despite their popularity with the troops they suffered from several drawbacks, not the least of which was the wait of up to 8 hours while they were attached or removed.



1st Armoured Coldstream Guards, Germany, March 1945

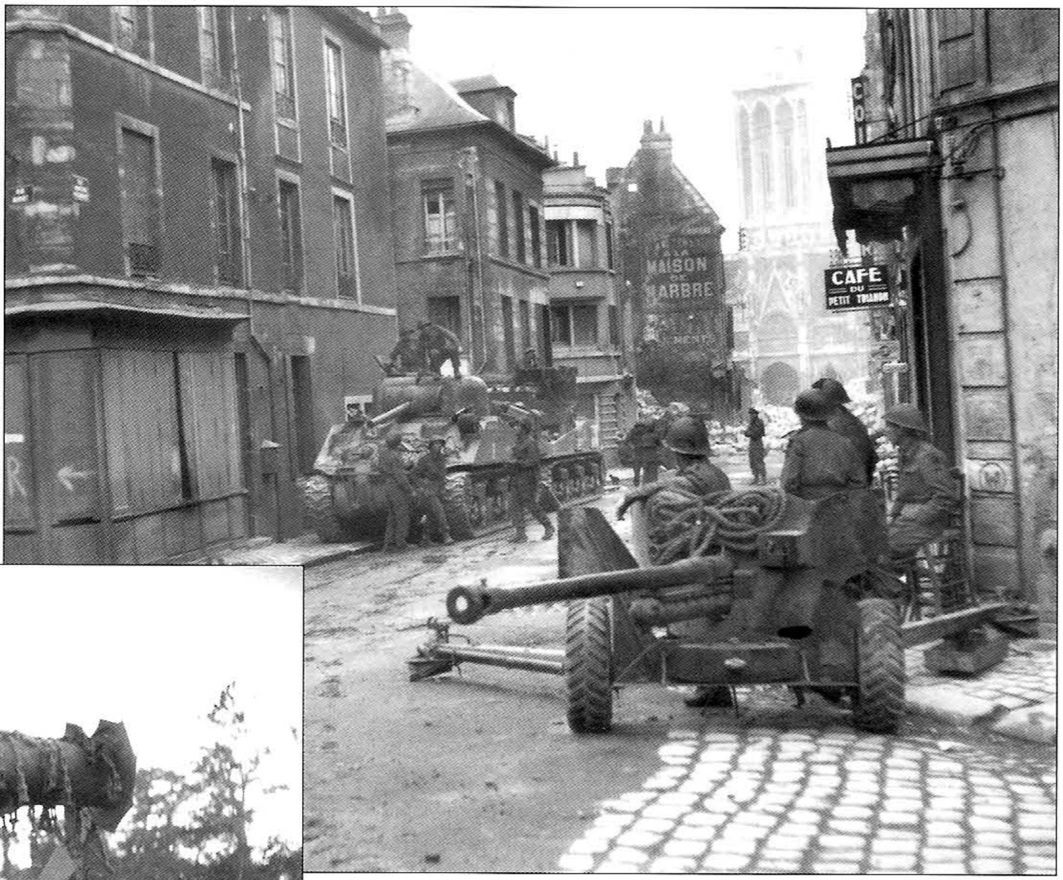
In late 1944 or early 1945 the Guards began adapting the 60lb SAP Rocket, used so successfully with the Typhoon fighter-bombers, to fire from a rail mounted on the turret sides of their Shermans. Some of the mounts and their rockets appear to have been painted, presumably in SCC 15, but others can be seen in their original RAF colors and markings. Another innovation claimed by the Guards was the white, or light grey, undershading used to disguise the 17pdr barrel. A well known artist, Rex Whistler, was serving with the Coldstream Guards at this time and is credited with having first proposed the idea. The rear portion of the hull of this Hybrid IC is painted in a decidedly lighter shade - possibly white. The Coldstream Guards used a system of numbers to indicate troops and letters to denote the tank within a troop - although squadron signs were also carried. The significance of the marking at the center of the hull rear is not known although it is quite clear in the photograph used for this illustration. All tanks seem to have carried the Guards formation badge. One curious aspect is that WD numbers seem to have been painted over - a practice apparently consistent throughout the division.

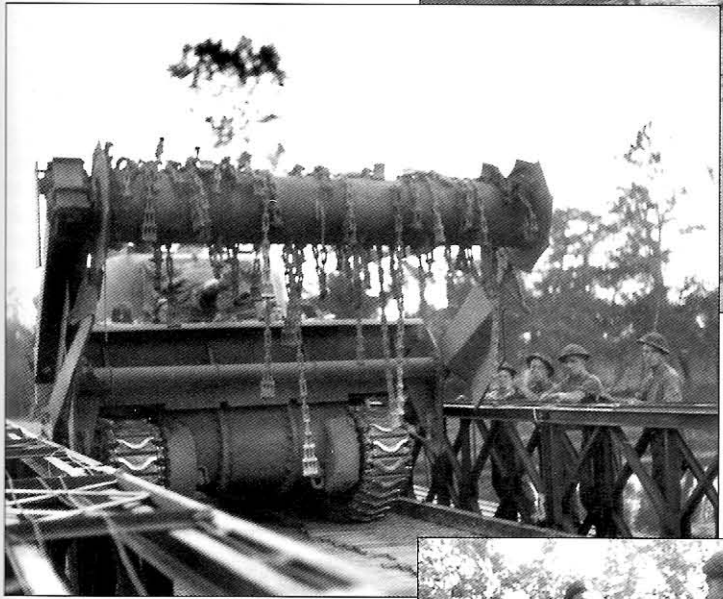


1st Battalion, Royal Tank Regiment, Germany, March 1945

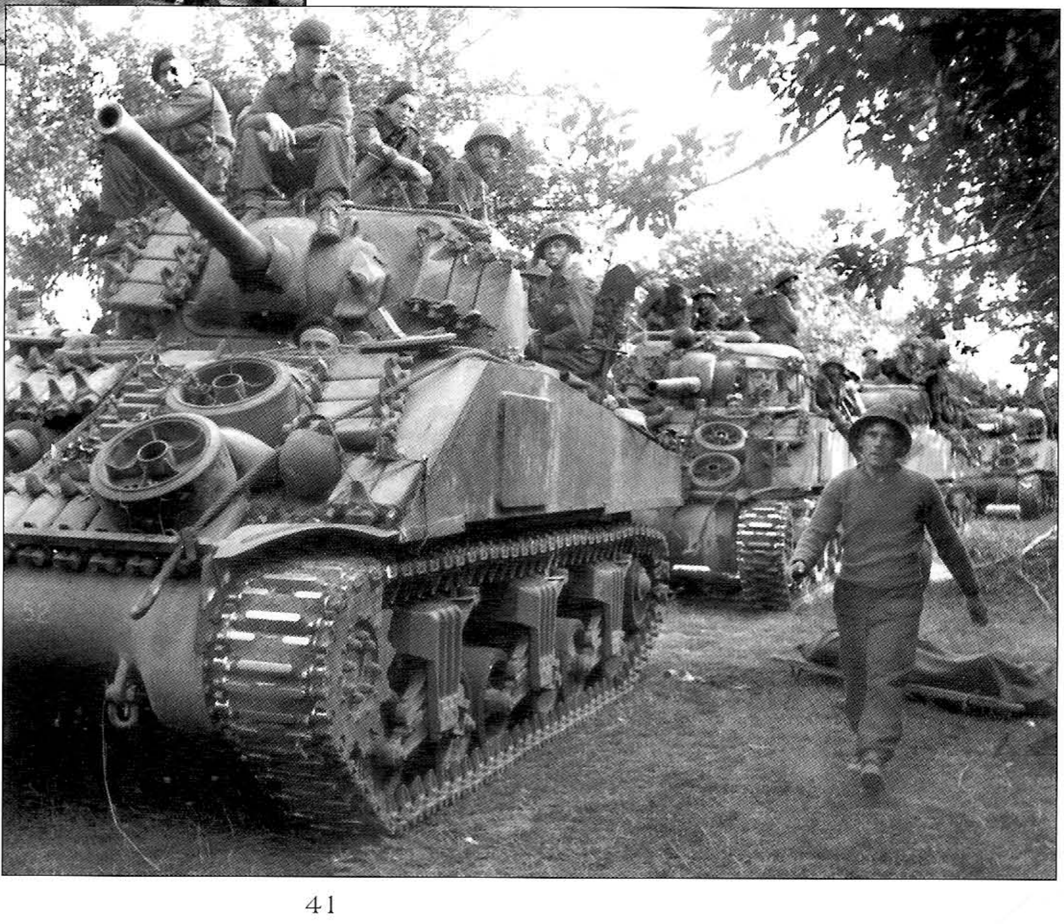
This IC Firefly was photographed with Cromwell tanks of the battalion in Ahaus, Germany after the town was captured in a night attack. The division's official history states that A Squadron made the attack and the identification is based on that. The colorful formation badge of 22nd Armoured Brigade, combined with the AoS sign for the second senior regiment is clearly visible on the right of the hull with the famous Desert Rat marking of 7th Armoured Division carried on the left - although the latter has a heavy coating of mud. Note that on tanks with the three-piece bolted transmission cover both markings tended to "wrap-around" the bulge over the drive sprocket. Although not visible in the photograph used as the basis for this illustration, squadron signs were normally worn and that of A Squadron is depicted here. Also shown is the stencilled anti-freeze warning usually painted onto the hull side or front. Of note are the grousers attached to the Steel Chevron tracks - an almost essential requirement during the winter of 1944/45.

Two command tanks are covered by a 6pdr anti-tank gun of 3rd Infantry Division in the center of Caen. On the nearest tank, in front of the lap gunner's hatch, an AoS sign with a white number 43 can be seen, indicating the second Field Artillery Regiment of an Infantry Division. Therefore these tanks may belong to 1st Battalion, The Royal Norfolk Regiment. 10 July 1944. (IWM B6924)

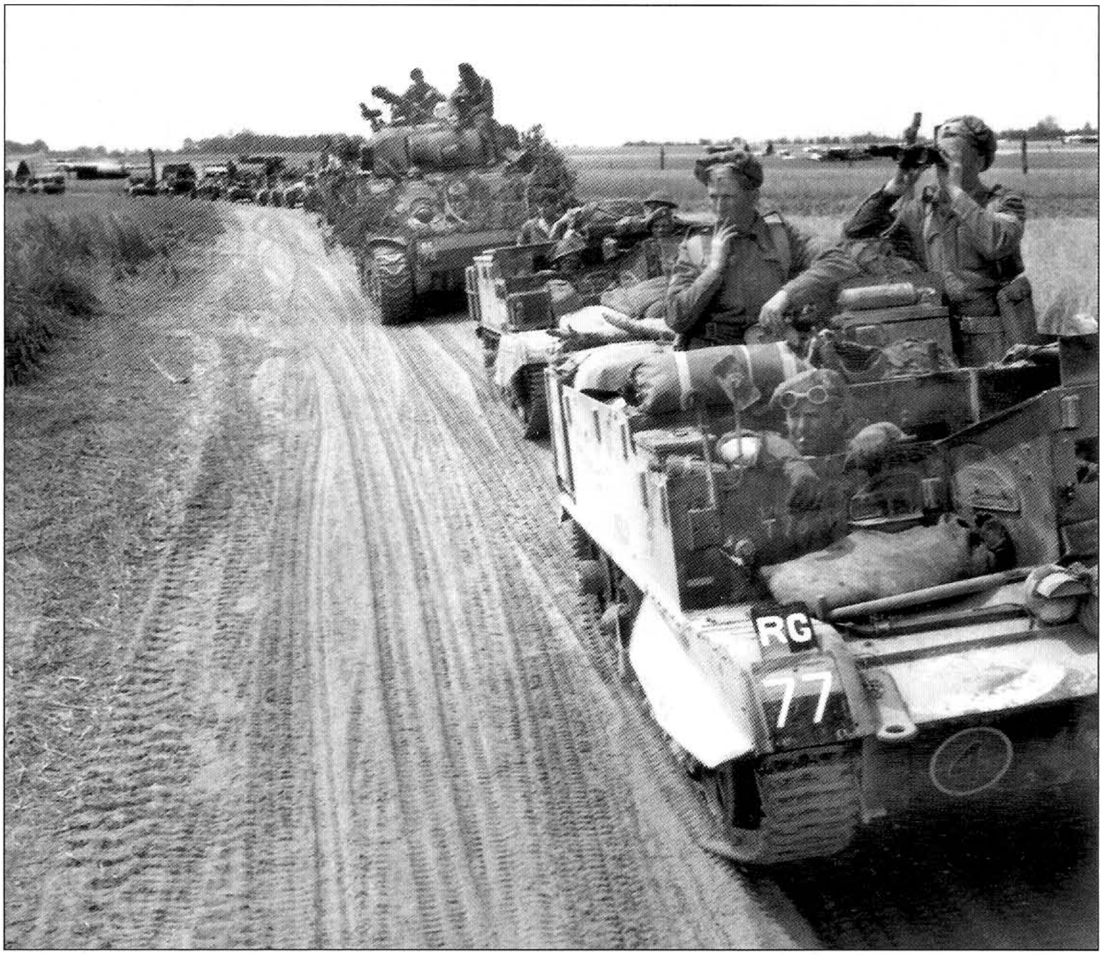




A Sherman Crab flail tank of 79th Armoured Division crosses a Bailey bridge over the Orne, as it moves up to the start line for Operation Goodwood. The arrangement of the drum and construction of the chains are shown here to good effect. 18 July 1944. (IWM B7499)

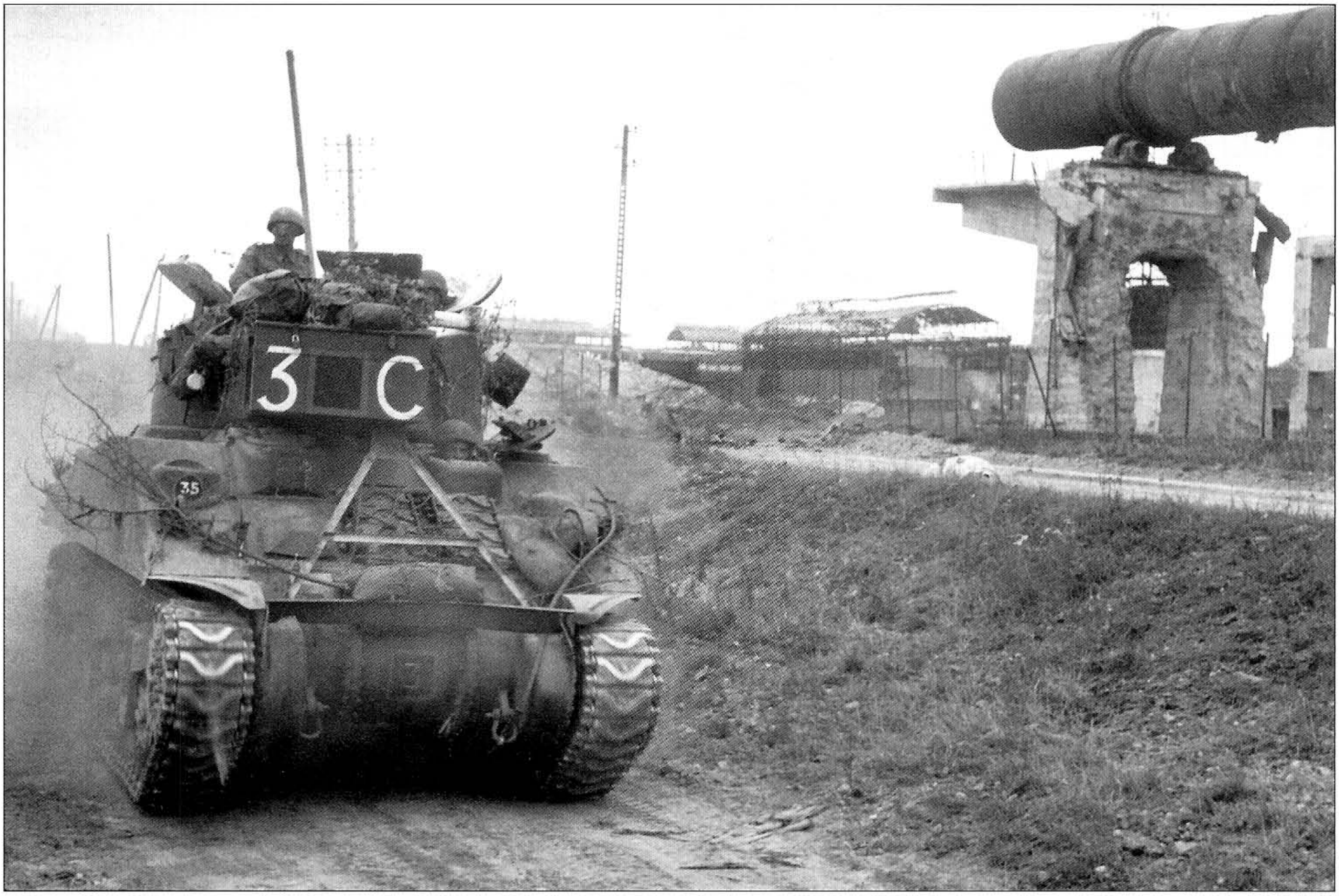


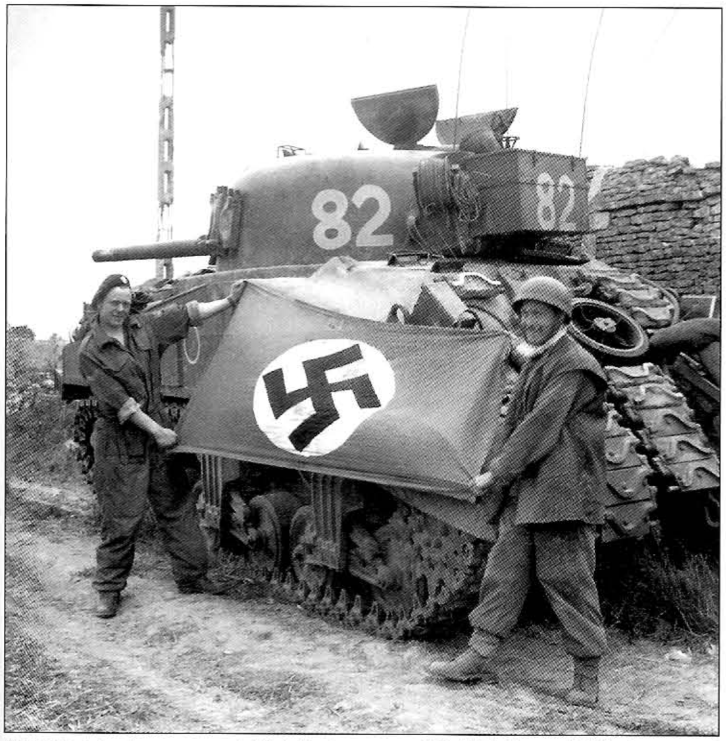
Sherman tanks of the Staffordshire Yeomanry, 27th Armoured Brigade, carrying infantry from 3rd Division, move up at the start of Operation Goodwood. The AoS sign can be seen at the center of the transmission cover. 18 July 1944. (IWM B7518)



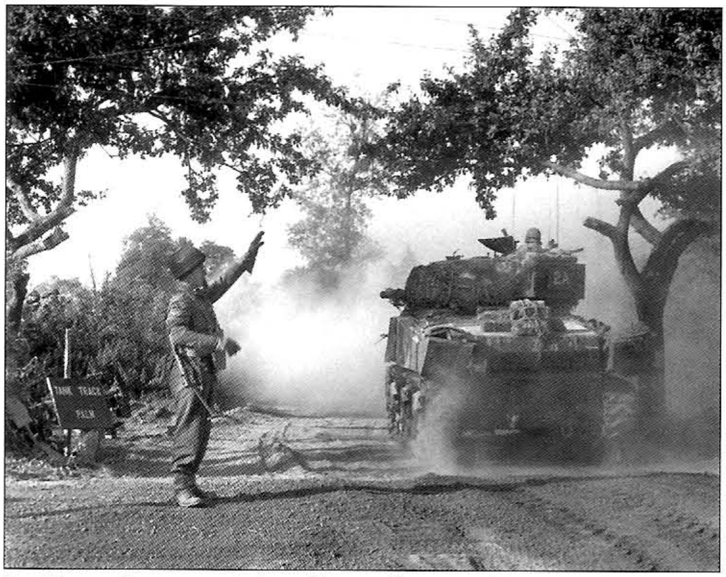
Carriers and a Sherman Artillery OP tank moving up to cross the Orne river during Operation Goodwood. The markings on the Carrier denote a Troop commander of an Anti-tank Regiment attached to an Armoured Division. Those on the Sherman indicate that this is the tank of a Troop commander of the senior Field Artillery Regiment attached to an Armoured Division. 18 July 1944. (IWM B7654)

A Sherman Firefly tank near Faub de Vaucelles, 19 July 1944. Although positive identification is not possible from the markings displayed here, the Coldstream Guards are known to have used a similar system of number, letter combination. The metal frame, which looks to be some kind of support, is very unusual. (IWM B 7743)

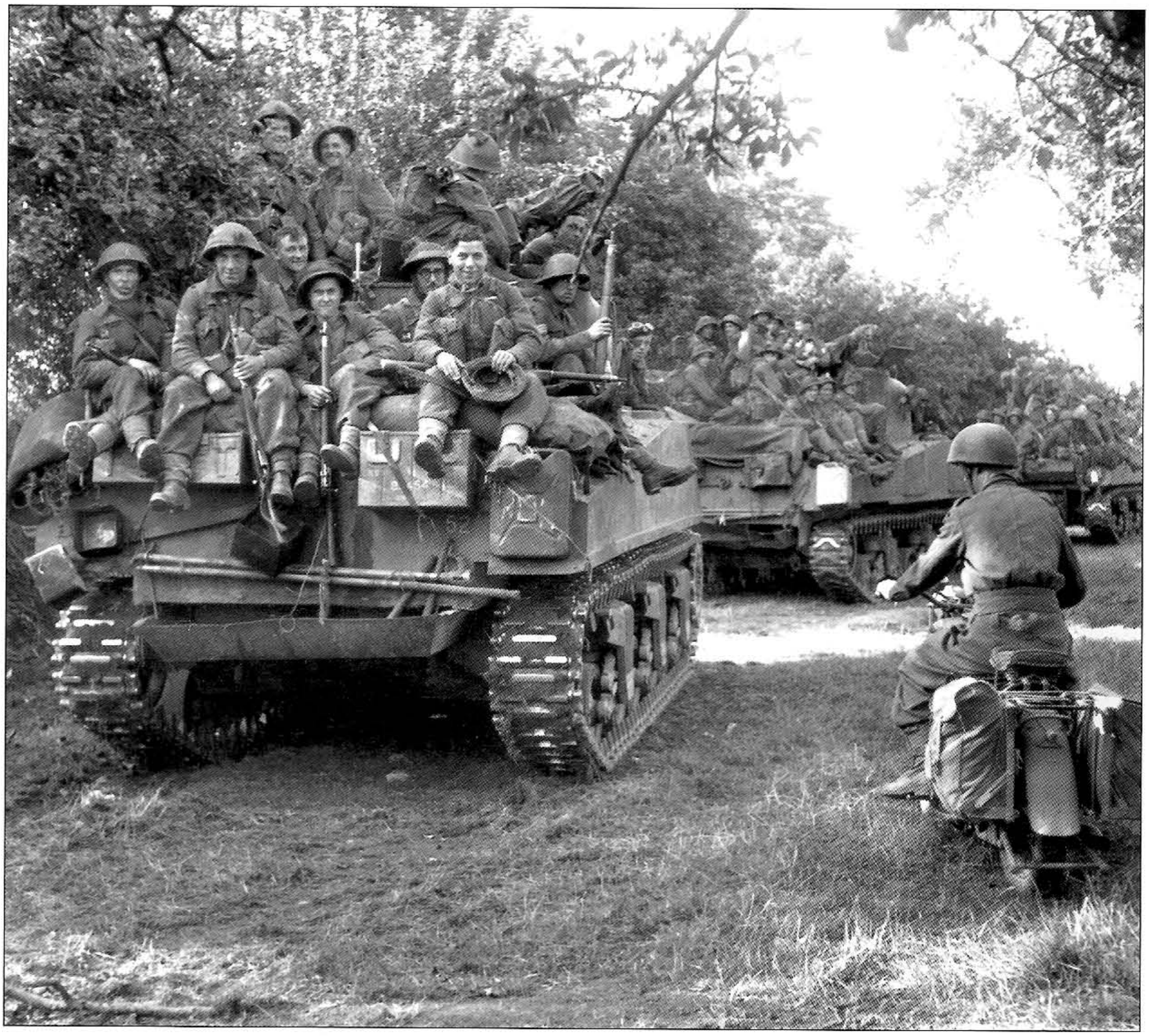




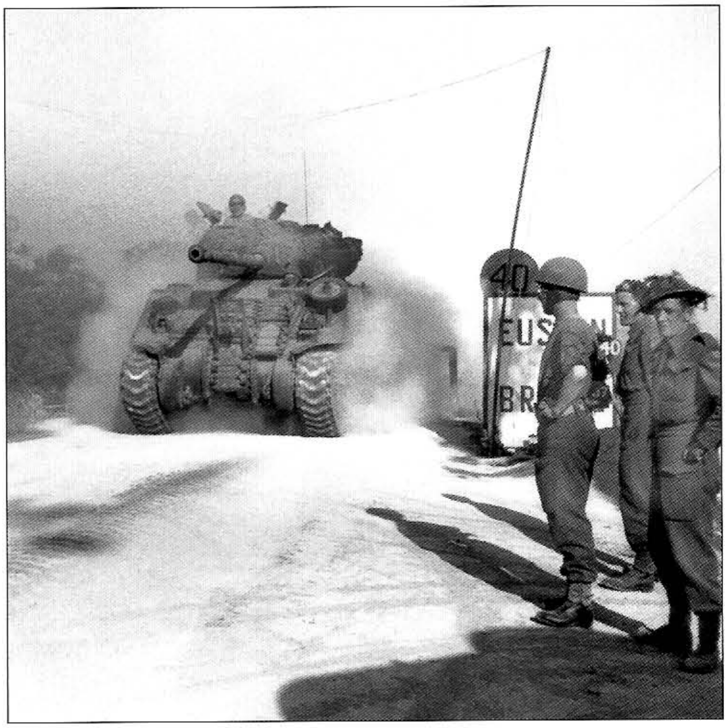
Sherman tank crewmen L/Cpl S. James and Sgt H. Coe of 27th Armoured Brigade proudly display a German flag they captured during the attack on Caen. The large call sign numbers were indicative of 144th RAC, the second senior regiment of this brigade, and the yellow C Squadron sign just next to L/Cpl James would seem to confirm this. 10 July 1944. (IWM B6904)



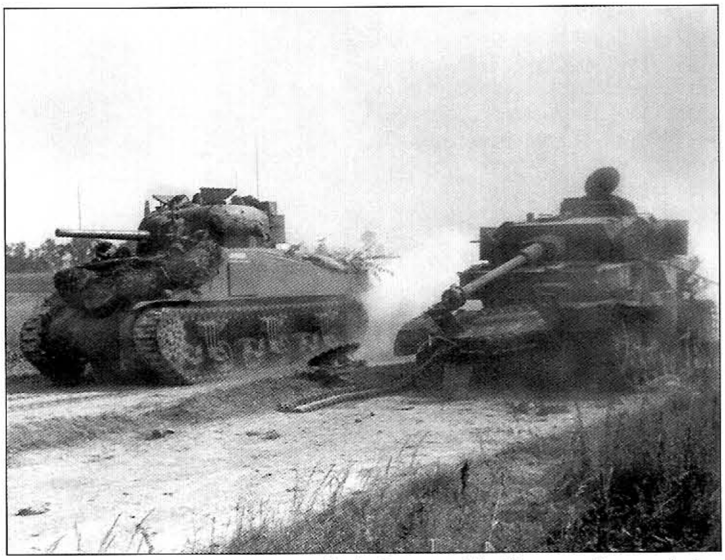
A military policeman controls traffic as a Sherman of the Coldstream Guards moves forward for the start of Operation Goodwood. The Guards formation badge can be seen on the left of the hull at the rear and the AoS on the right. The attachment of the pieces of sandshield to the hull as stowage bins is noteworthy. 18 July 1944. (IWM B7523)



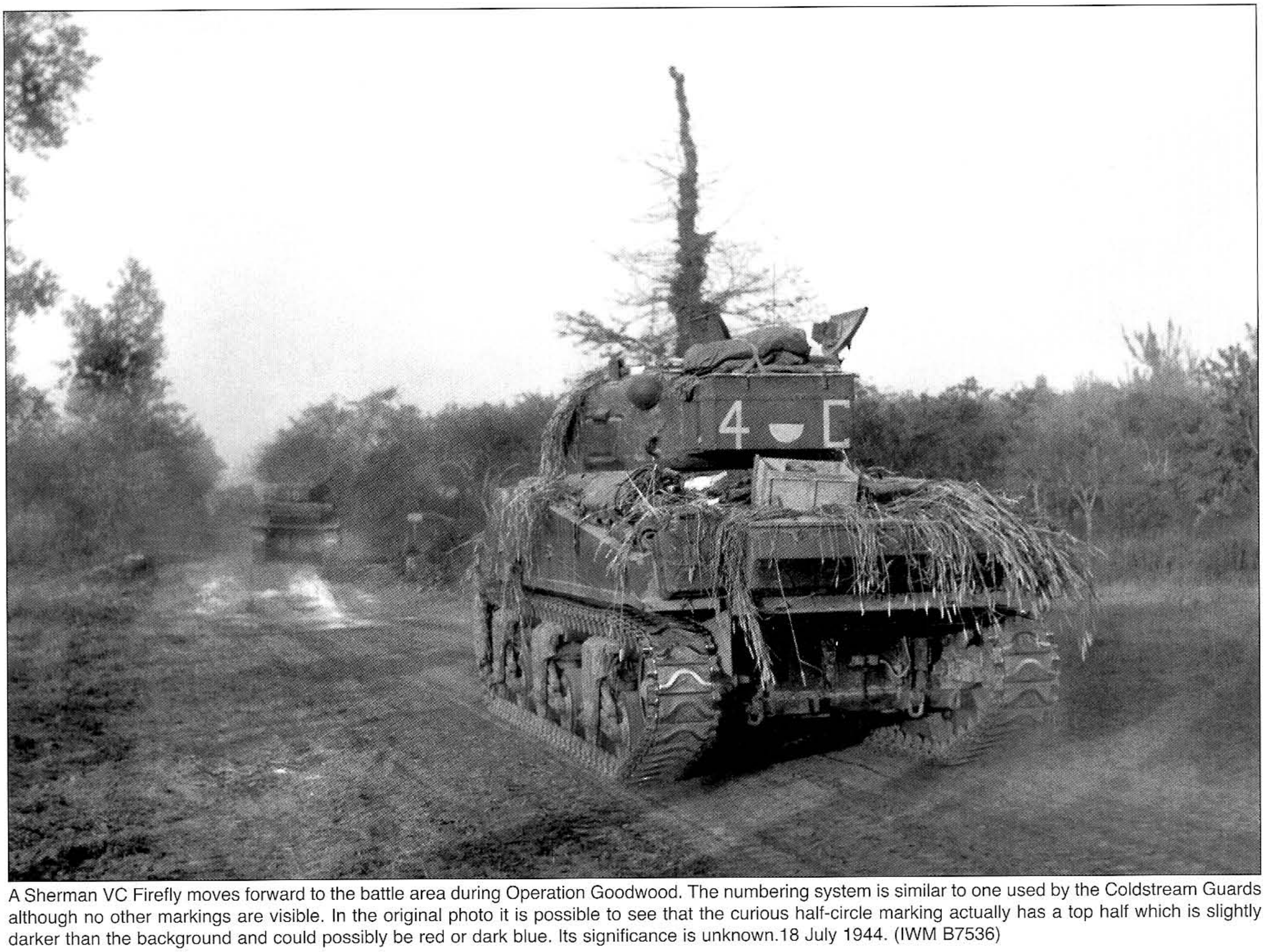
Sherman tanks of the Staffordshire Yeomanry, 27th Armoured Brigade, carrying infantry from 3rd Infantry Division, move up at the start of Operation Goodwood. The AoS sign of the second senior regiment, a white 52 on a red square, can be seen on the right of the rear hull. Of the independent armored brigades in France this was the only brigade to officially use the divisional number sequence 50, 51, 52 and 53. 18 July 1944. (IWM B7520)



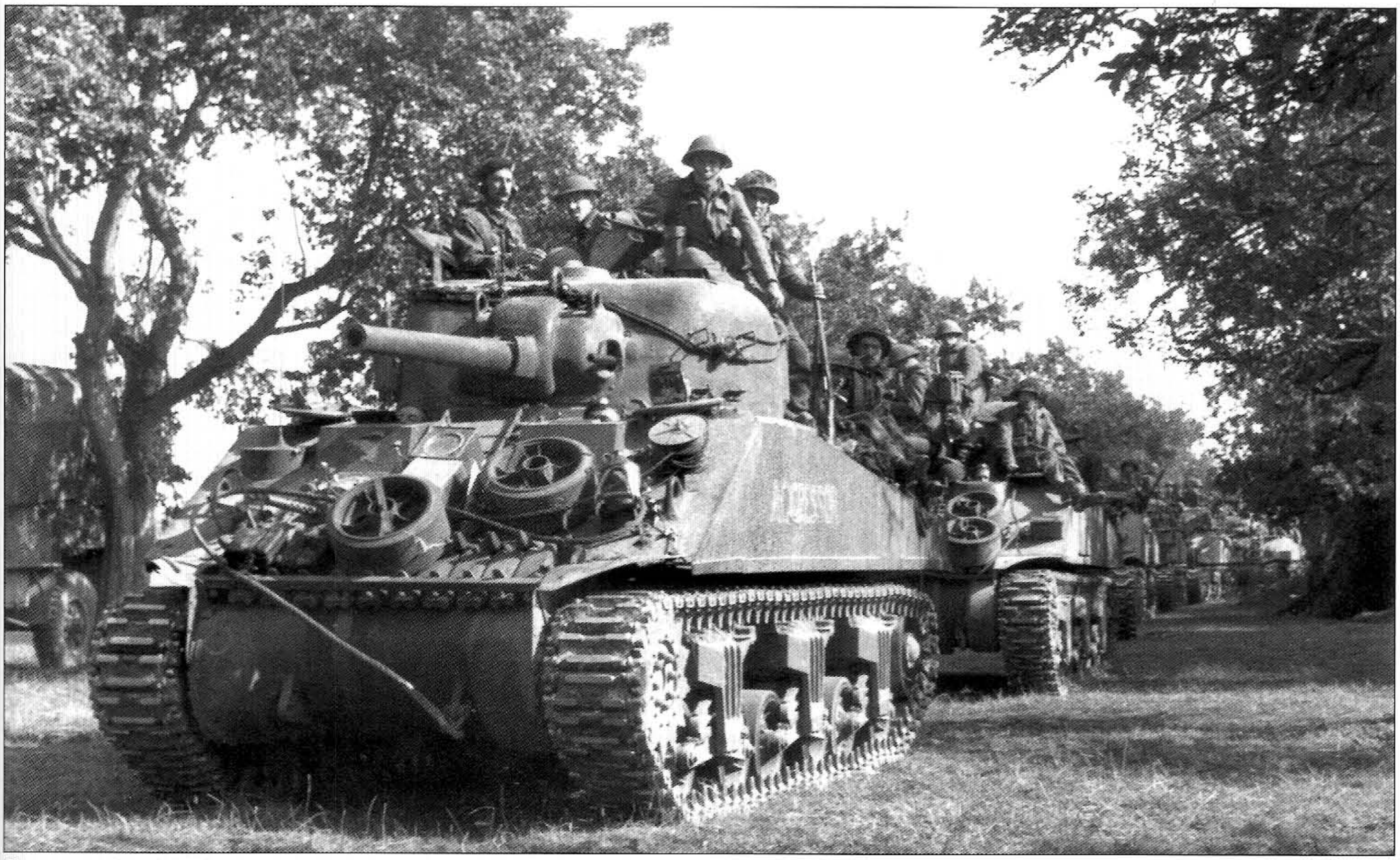
A Firefly crosses Euston Bridge over the Orne river as it moves up to the start line for Operation Goodwood. A thick coat of dust obscures any markings the vehicle may have. As with an earlier photo in this series a metal frame has been attached to the hull front, presumably as a support for the 17pdr gun. 18 July 1944. (IWM B7525)



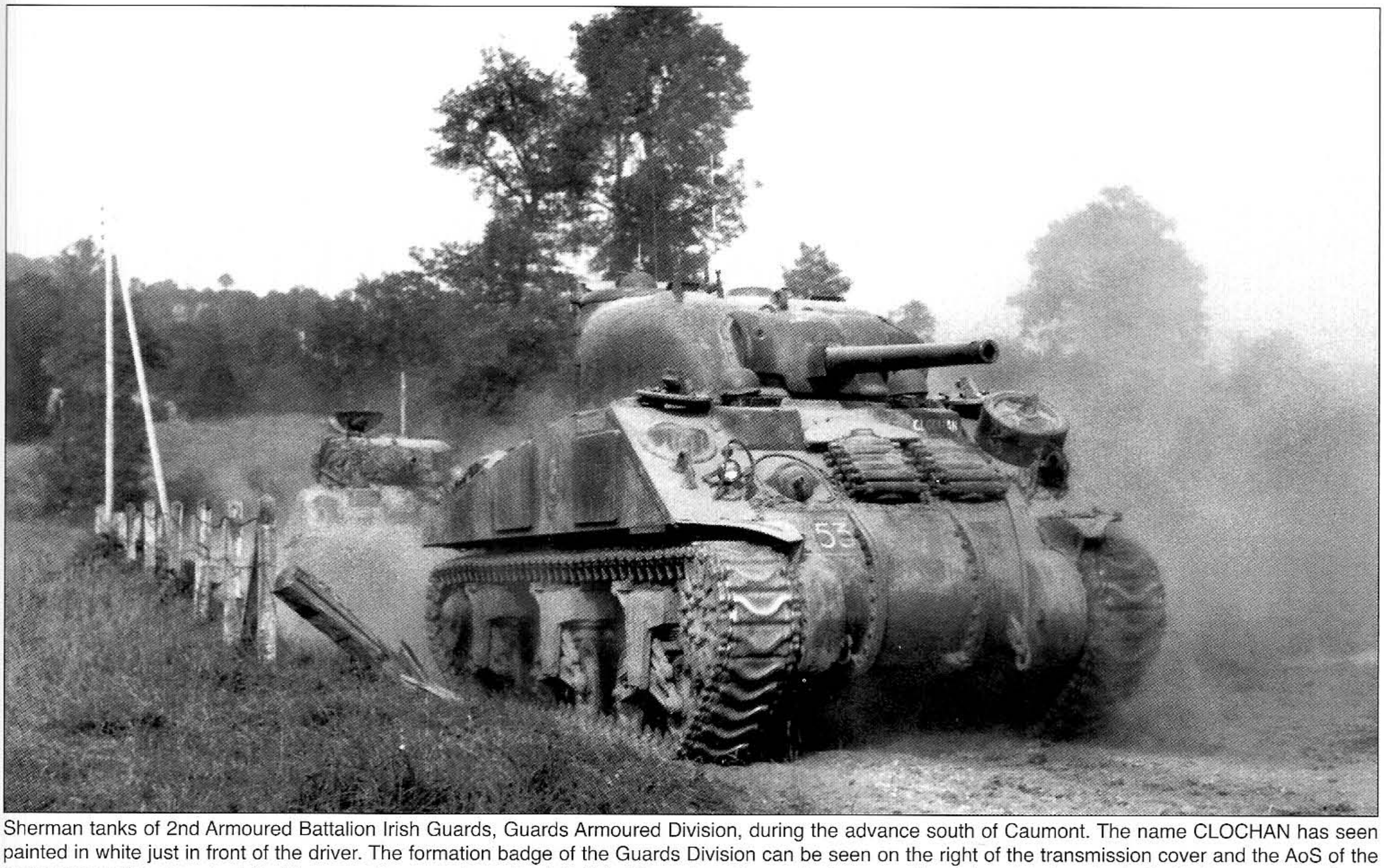
A Sherman tank passes a wrecked German Mk IV near Cagny during Operation Goodwood. 18 July 1944. (IWM B7760)



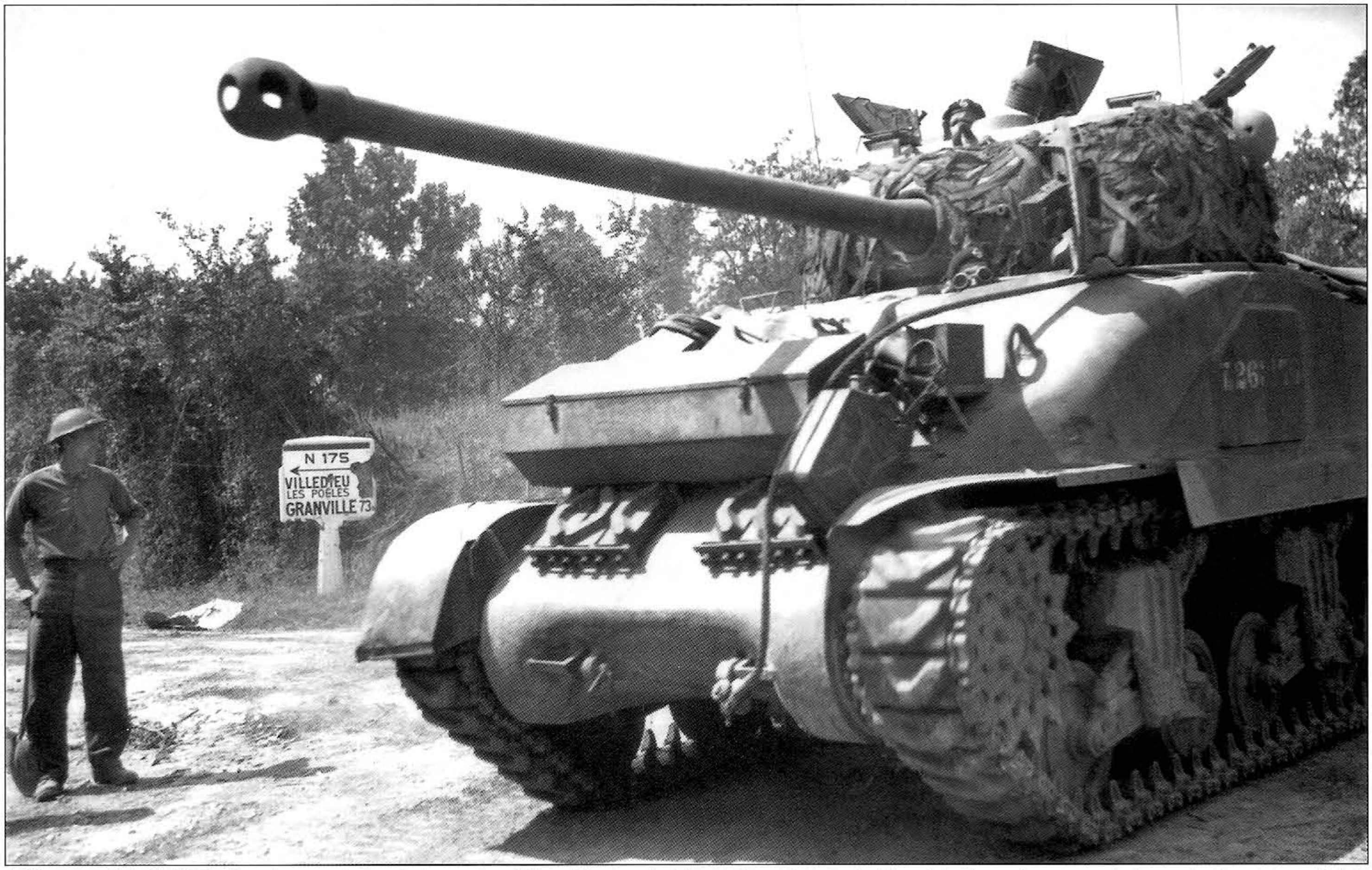
A Sherman VC Firefly moves forward to the battle area during Operation Goodwood. The numbering system is similar to one used by the Coldstream Guards although no other markings are visible. In the original photo it is possible to see that the curious half-circle marking actually has a top half which is slightly darker than the background and could possibly be red or dark blue. Its significance is unknown.18 July 1944. (IWM B7536)



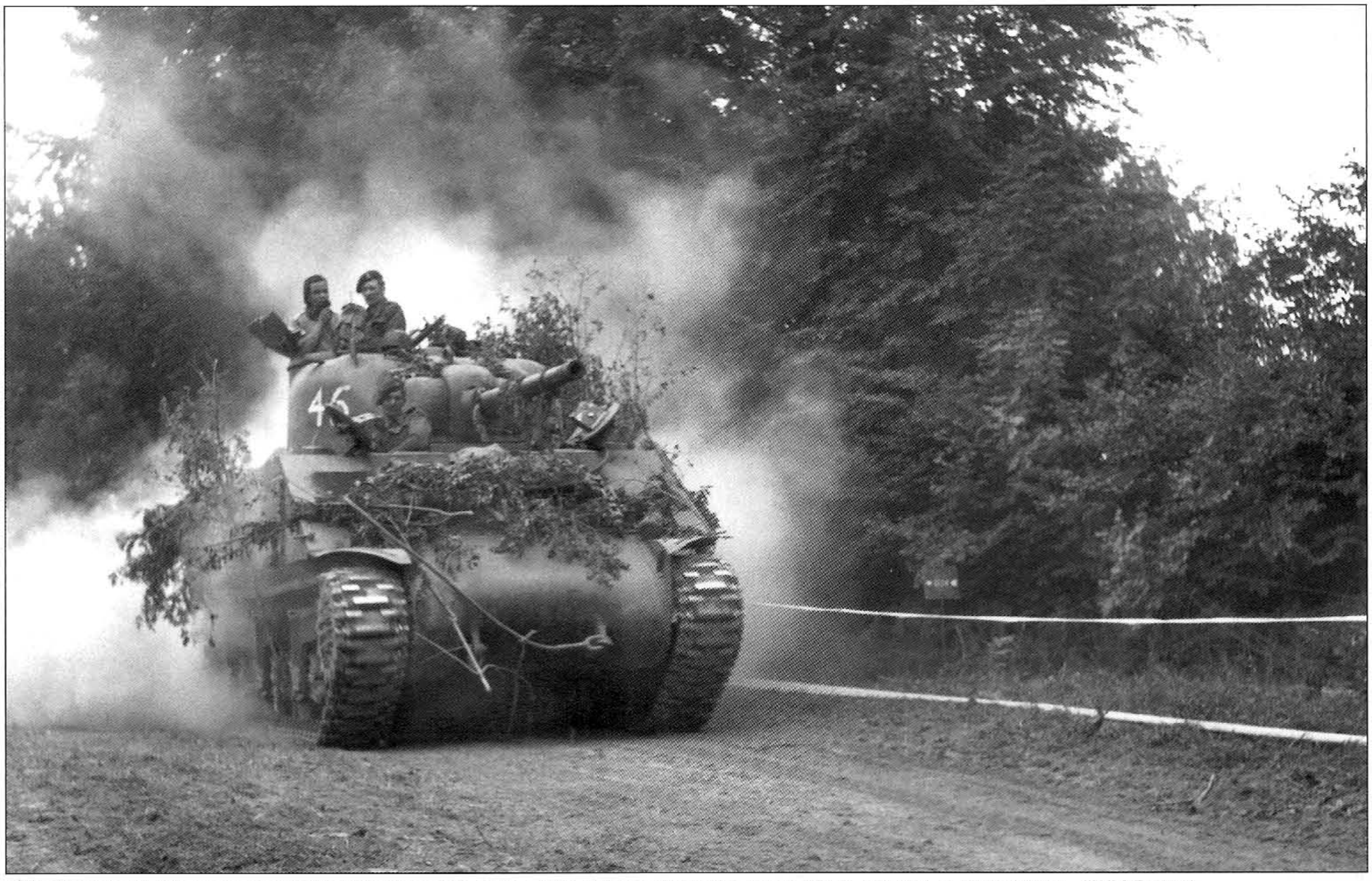
Sherman tanks of the Staffordshire Yeomanry, 27th Armoured Brigade, carrying infantry from 3rd Division, move up at the start of Operation Goodwood. The tank nearest the camera has the name AGRESSOR painted on the side of the hull, possibly in red, with a white outline. Other names in this style such as CRUSADER would suggest that the names corresponded with the squadron letter. 18 July 1944. (IWM B7555)



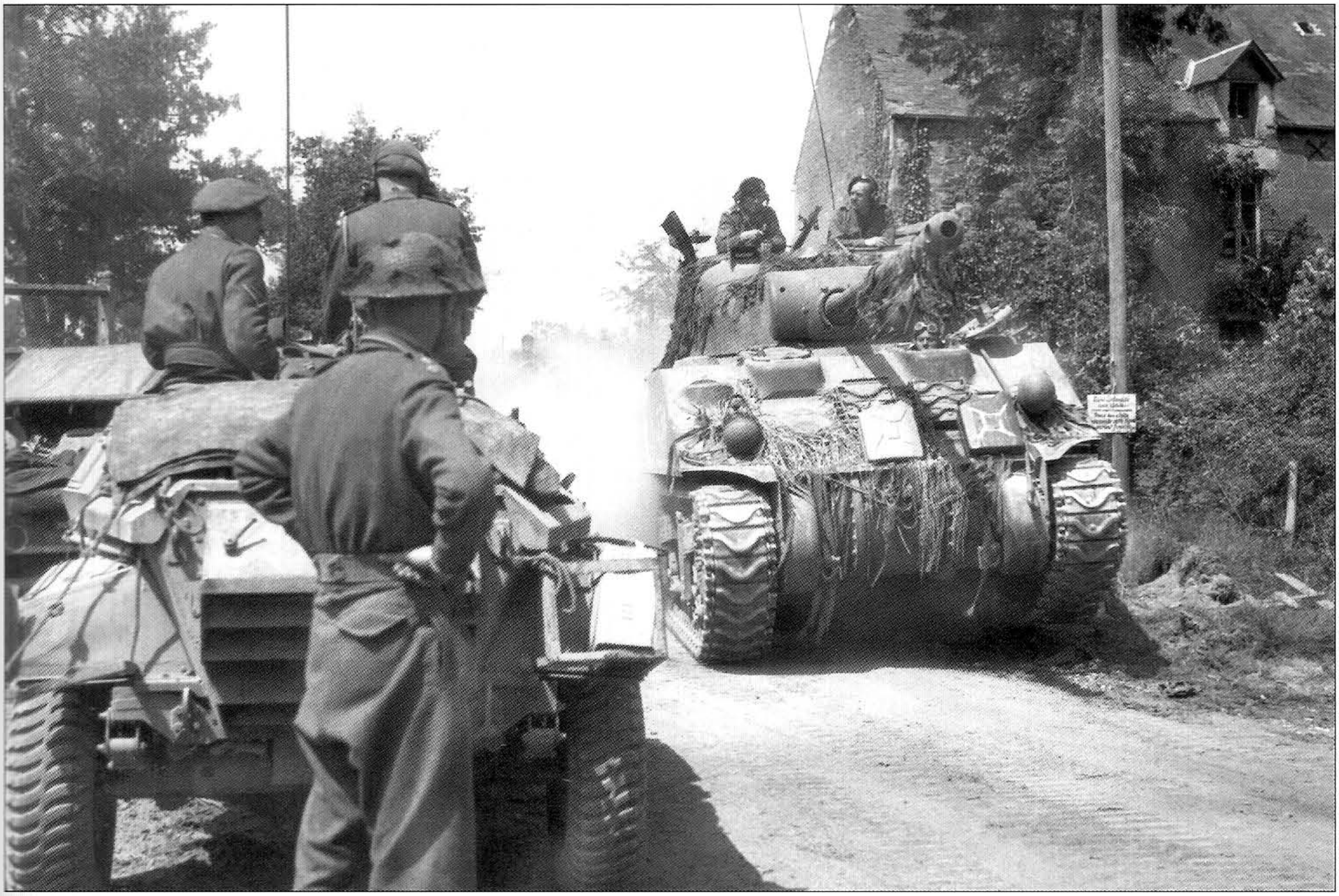
Sherman tanks of 2nd Armoured Battalion Irish Guards, Guards Armoured Division, during the advance south of Caumont. The name CLOCHAN has seen painted in white just in front of the driver. The formation badge of the Guards Division can be seen on the right of the transmission cover and the AoS of the junior armored regiment, white 53 on a red square, is on the left. A 3rd Squadron sign enclosing a number 2 is painted on the hull side between the pieces of appliqué armor. In keeping with their traditions, the armored Guards regiments referred to their squadrons as 1, 2 and 3. 31 July 1944. (IWM B8280)


N 175
VILLEDIEU
LES POELES
GRANVILLE 73

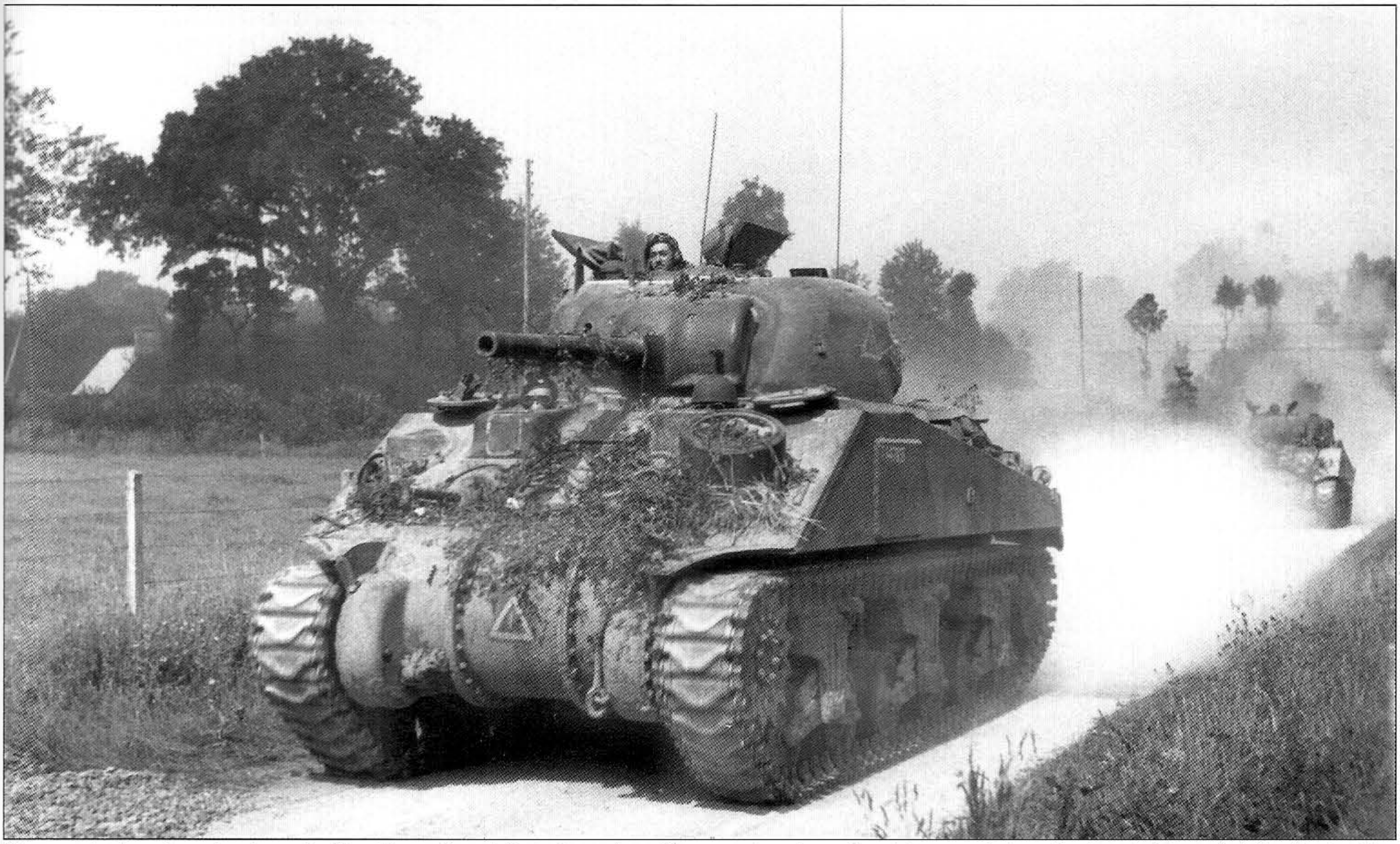
A Sherman Hybrid IC Firefly advances towards Aunay-sur-Odon, Normandy. The unit is unknown but the driver's and commander's cap badges are certainly those of the RTR. 31 July-1 August 1944. (IWM B8370)



A Sherman tank advances near Boussigny. The style of the white number 45 on the turret side is unusual. 1 August 1944. (IWM B8359)

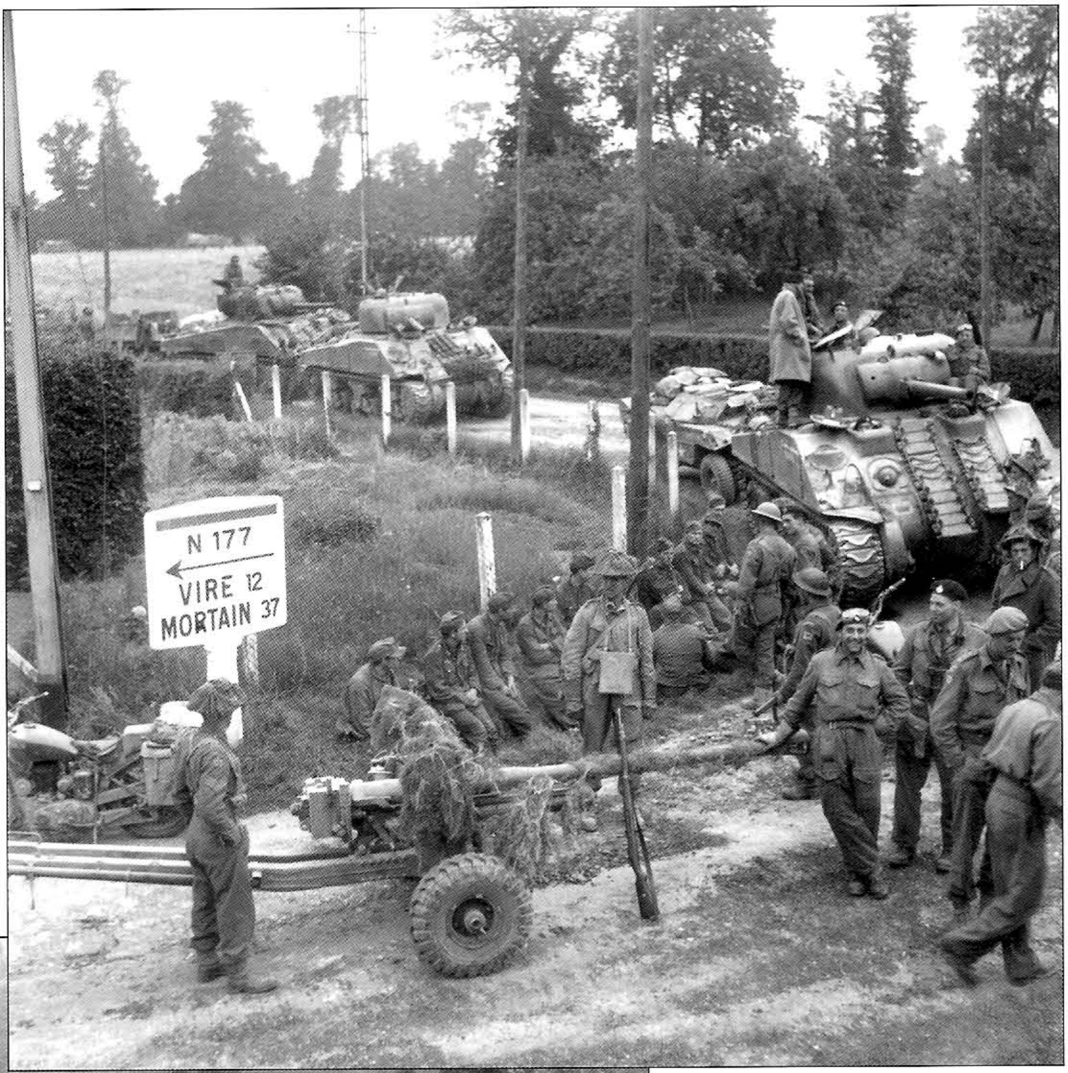


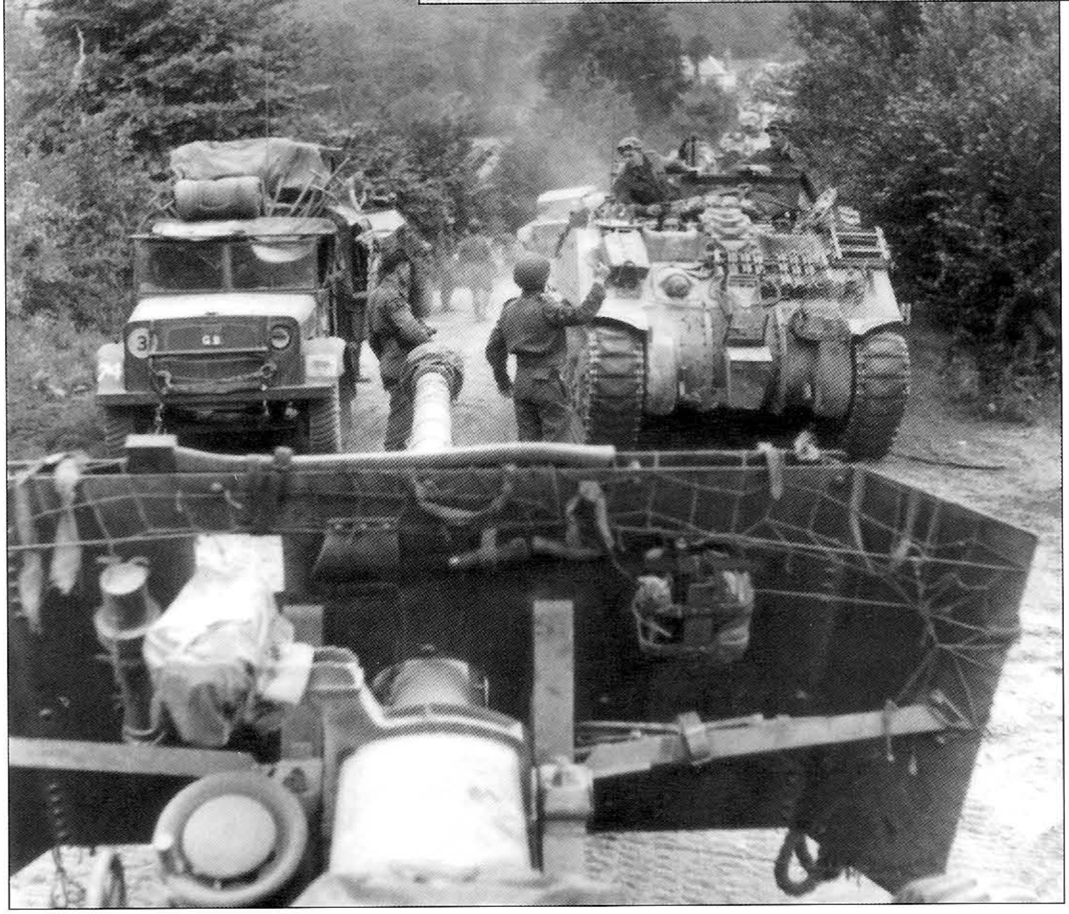
A Sherman Firefly passes a Humber Scout Car during the advance towards Aunay-sur-Odon, Normandy. 1 August 1944. (IWM B8371)



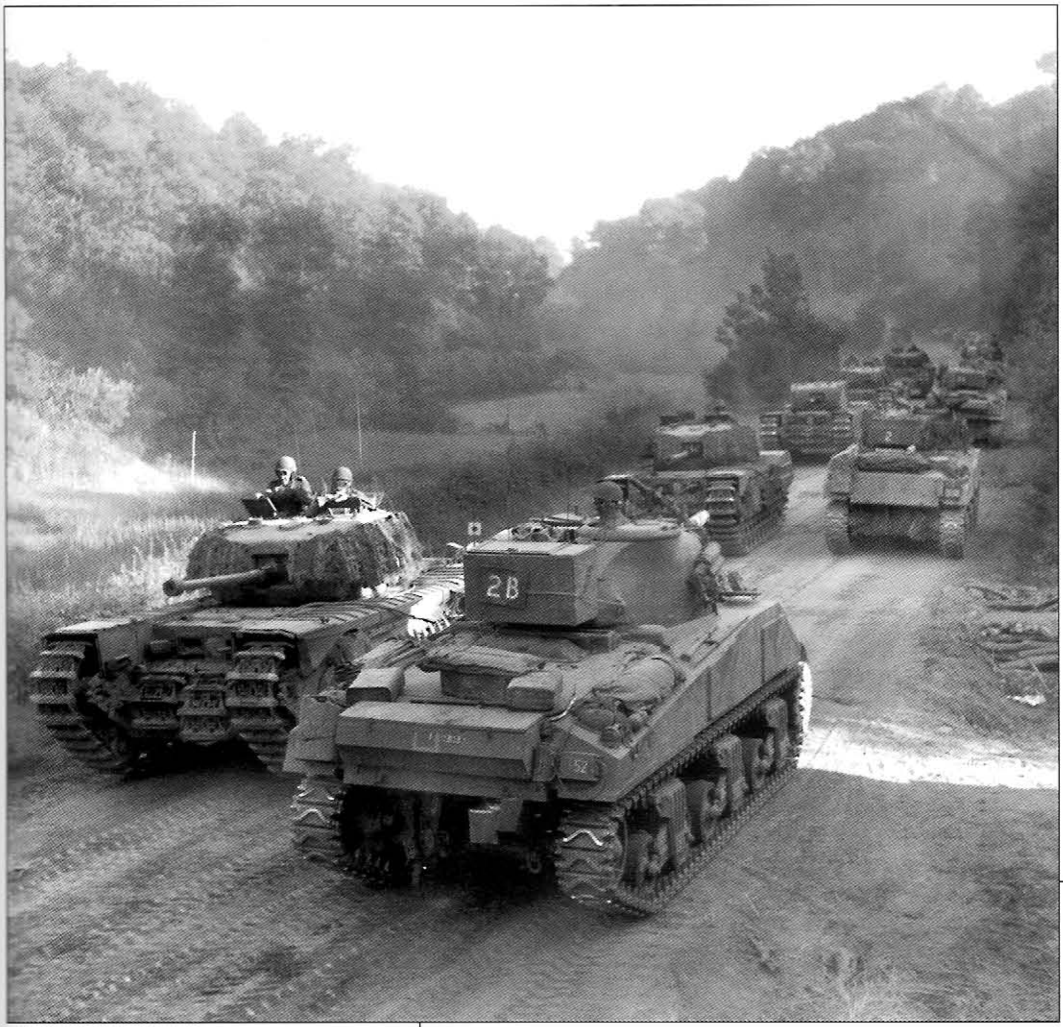
Sherman tanks advancing towards Vire. The yellow A Squadron sign with an enclosed number 1 is repeated on the turret side and at the front of the transmission cover. Barely visible next to the mudguard at left is a number 52. 2 August 1944. (IWM B8484)

Sherman of 11th Armoured Division, possibly 3rd RTR, pauses next to a 6pdr anti-tank gun and a collection of German prisoners in St Charles-de-Percy, on the road to Vire. 2 August 1944. (IWM B8488)

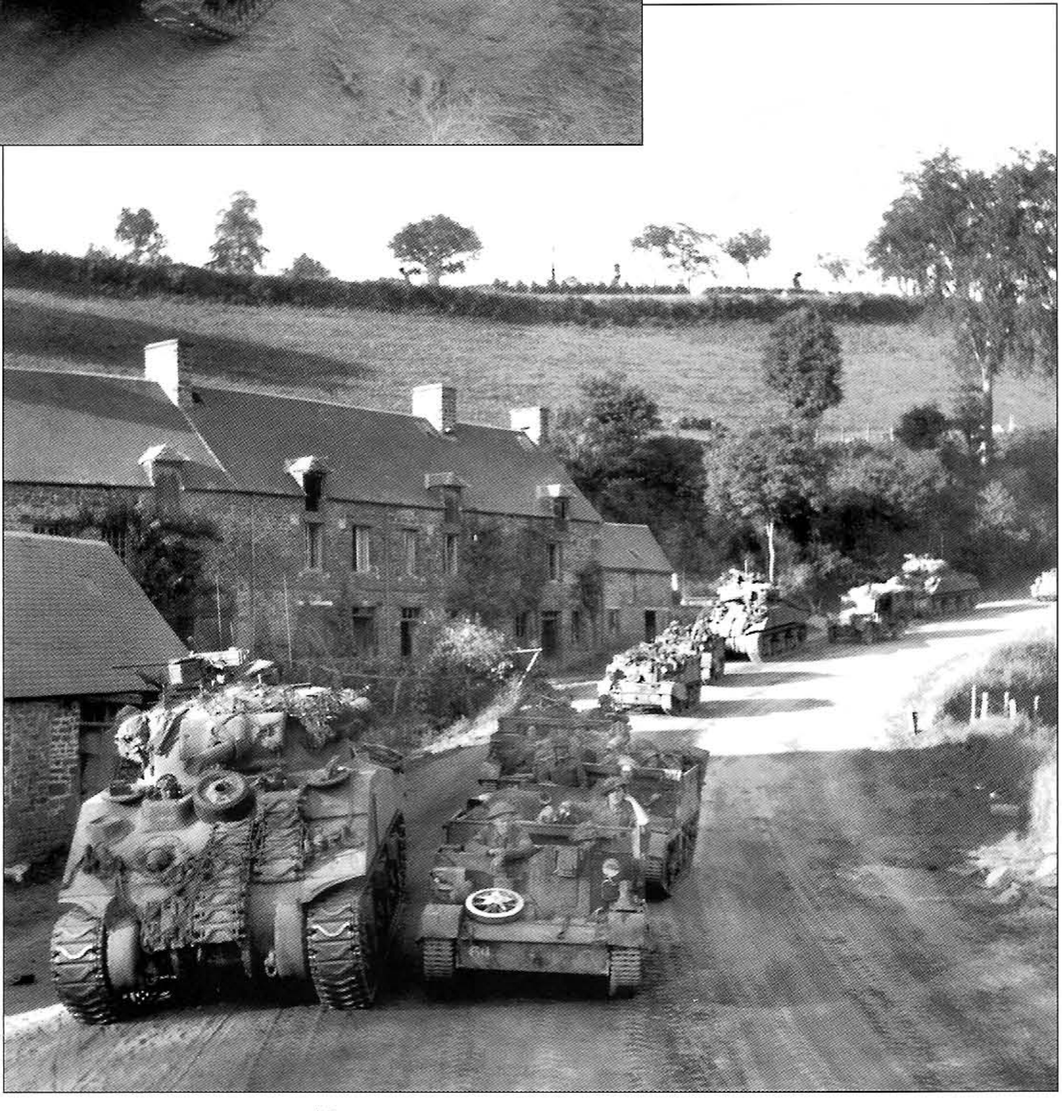




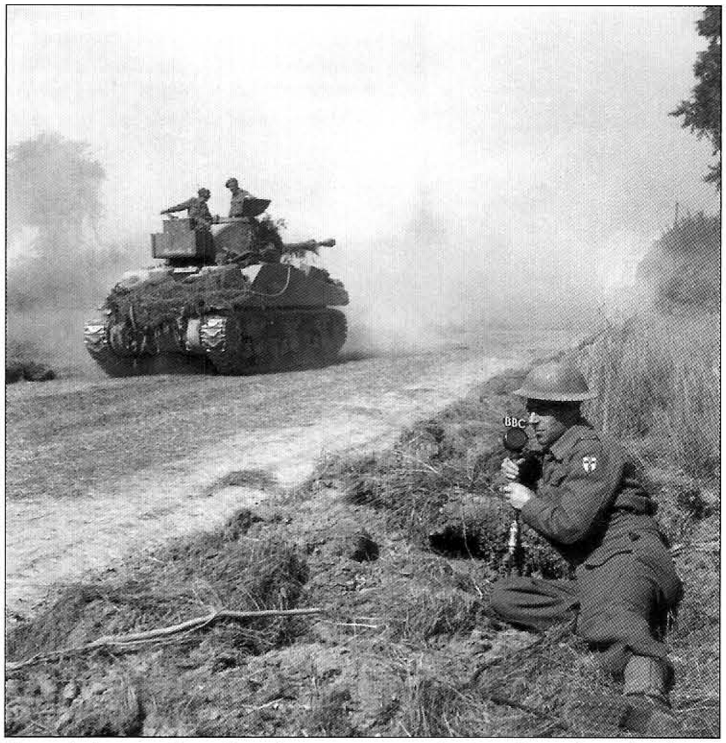
A Sherman ARV and other vehicles of 11th Armoured Division, viewed from a 17pdr anti-tank gun, queue to cross the bridge over the Souleuvre river during the advance to Vire. 2 August 1944. (IWM B8489)



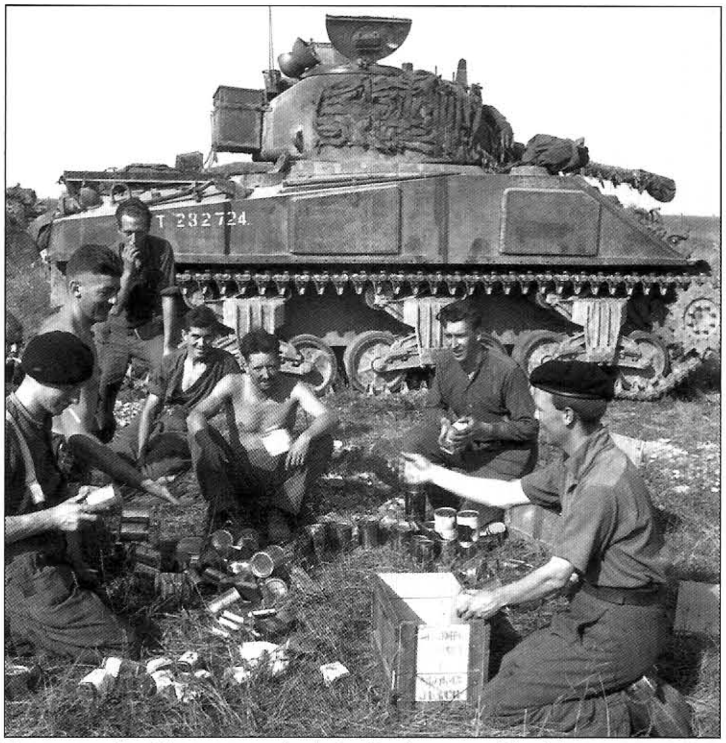
Sherman V's, probably of 1st Armoured Coldstream Guards, pass a column of Churchill Mk IV's as they advance towards Vassy. 4 August 1944. (IWM B8599)



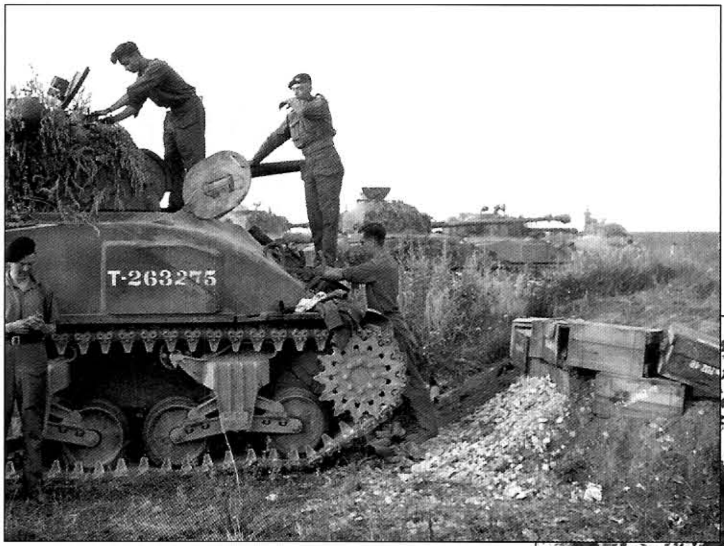
Sherman tanks and Bren Carriers on the road to Montchamp during the advance towards Vassy. The lead Carrier bears the AoS sign of a Machinegun Support Battalion of an Infantry Division – white 64 on a black square. 4 August 1944. (IWM B8601)



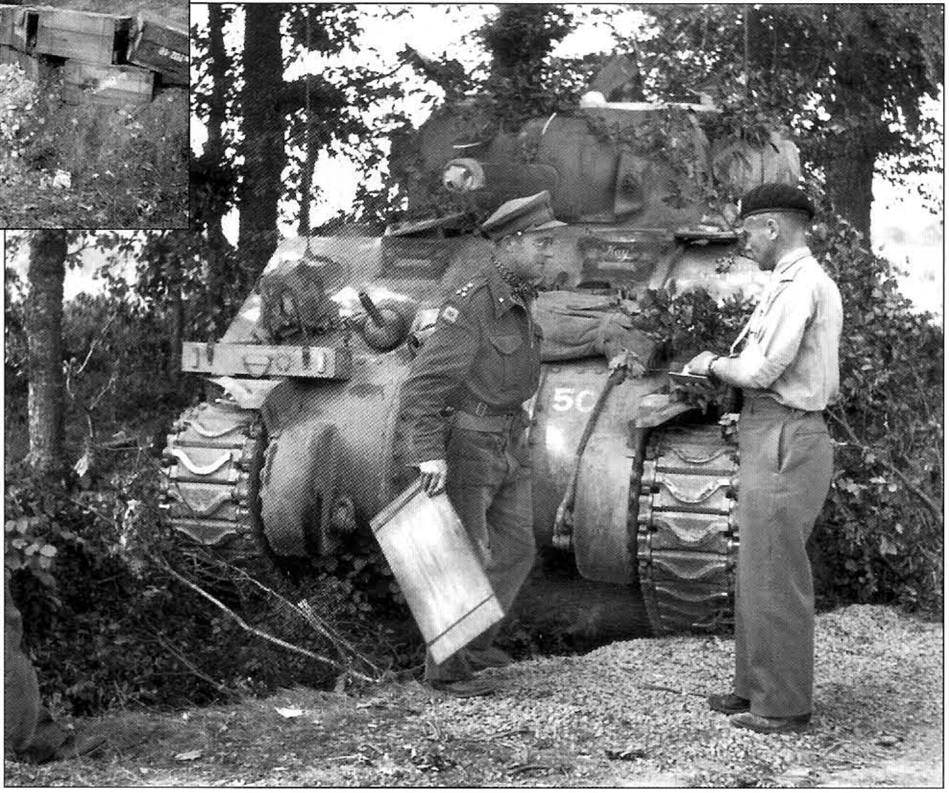
Pierre Lefevre, a Free French war correspondent, making a broadcast as a Sherman Firefly tank moves up to the battle area. On the rear of the turret extension can be seen the name Banshee II in white script. 5 August 1944. (IWM B8710)



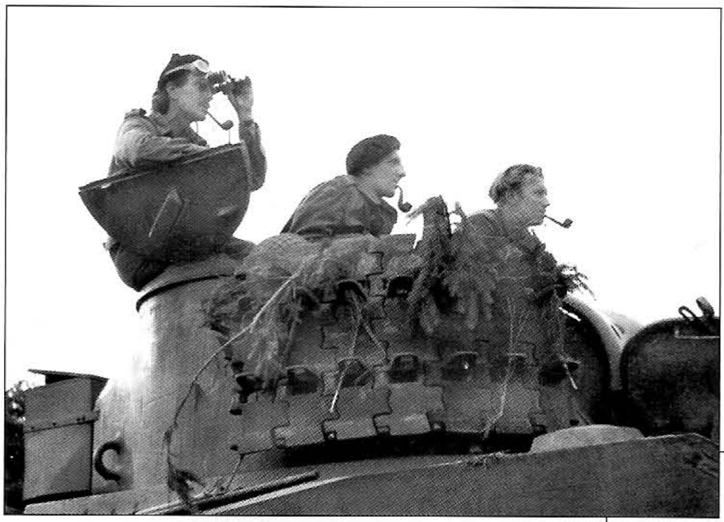
The crew of a Sherman tank of 1st Northamptonshire Yeomanry receive rations before the start of Operation Totalise. Just above the appliqué armor at the front of the hull can be seen the name HELMDON in red lettering outlined in white. 7 August 1944. (IWM B8796)



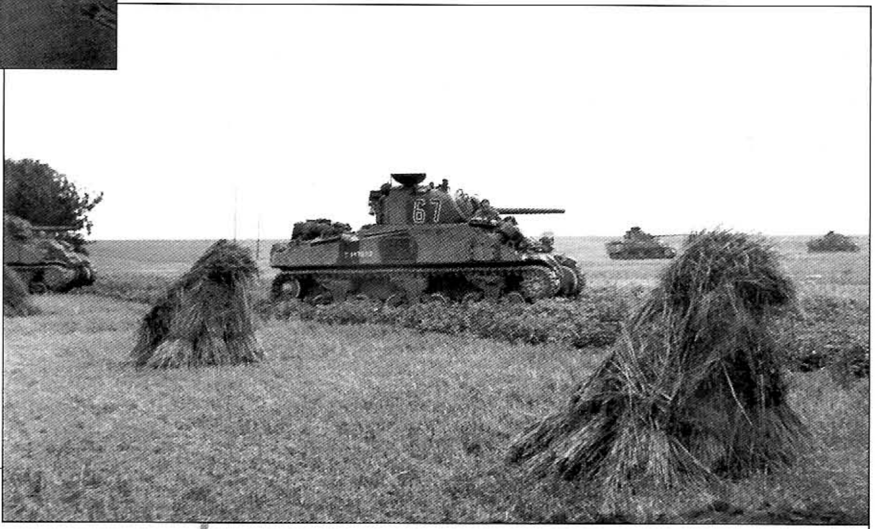
A Sherman Hybrid I just prior to the start of Operation Totalise. The join of the two hulls and the position of the hull hatches is shown clearly here. 7 August 1944. (IWM B8805)



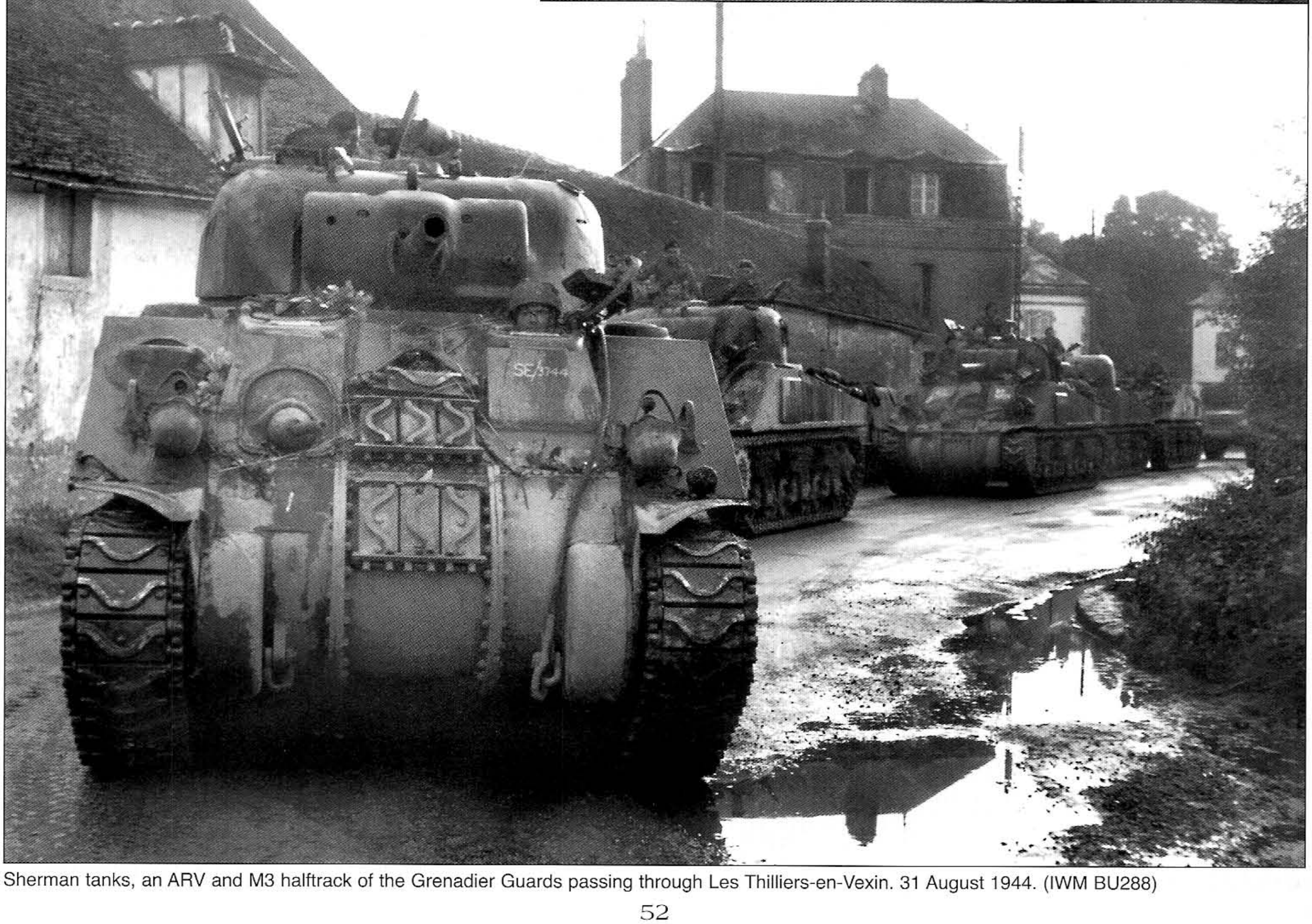
Major General G.P.B. 'Pip' Roberts, DSO, MC, commanding 11th Armoured Division with Brigadier Harvey, DSO and Bar, 29th Armoured Brigade's commander confer in front of a Sherman I Command Tank. The AoS sign of Brigade HQ, a white 50 on a red square, can be seen to the right of Harvey with formation badge just behind him. The name 'Kay', in white script, has been painted above the direct vision slot of the driver's position which has been welded shut. (IWM B9184)



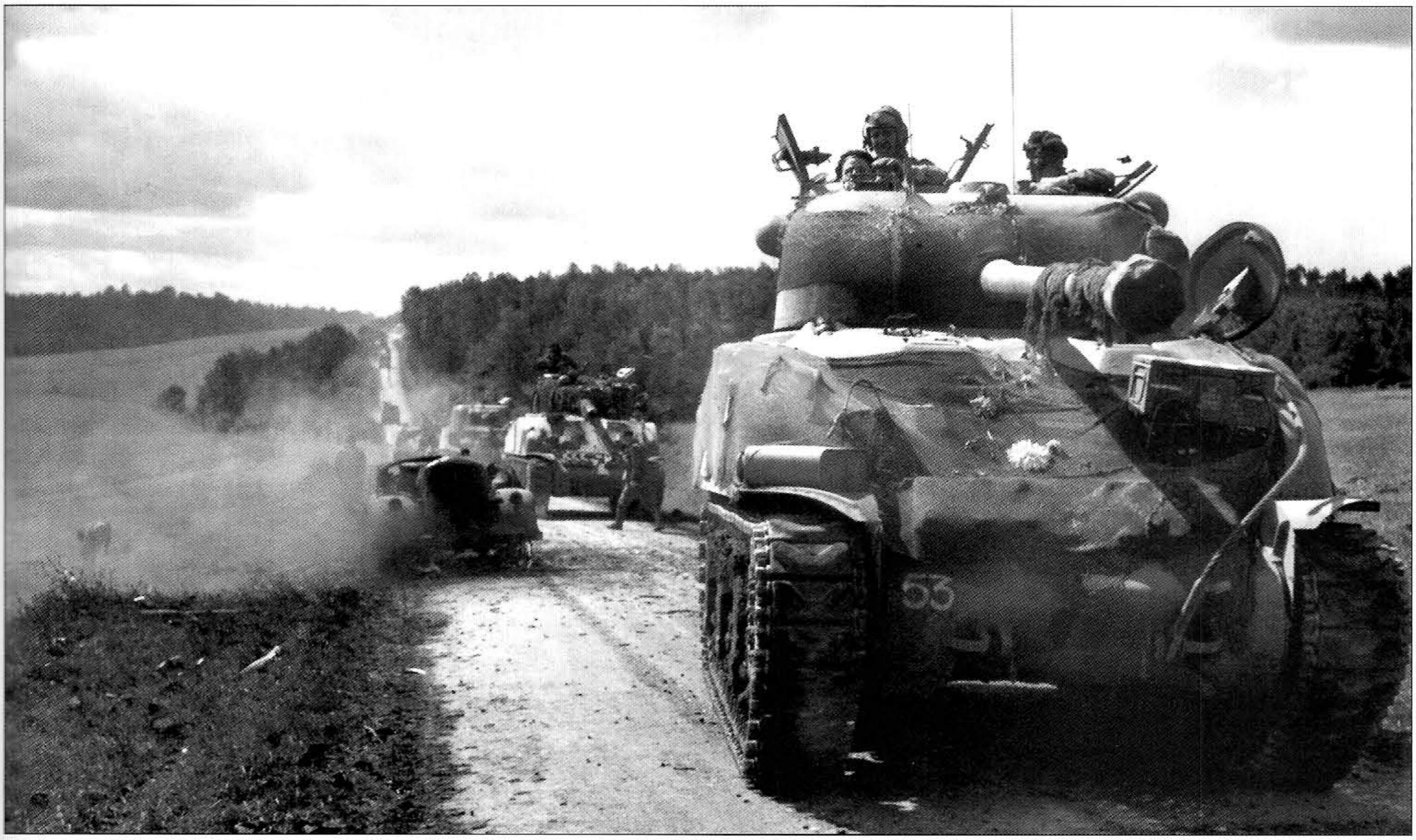
A Sherman tank crew, smoking a variety of pipes, awaits the order to advance near Argentan. A length of track taken from a German Panther has been welded to the turret side. 21 August 1944. (IWM B9538)



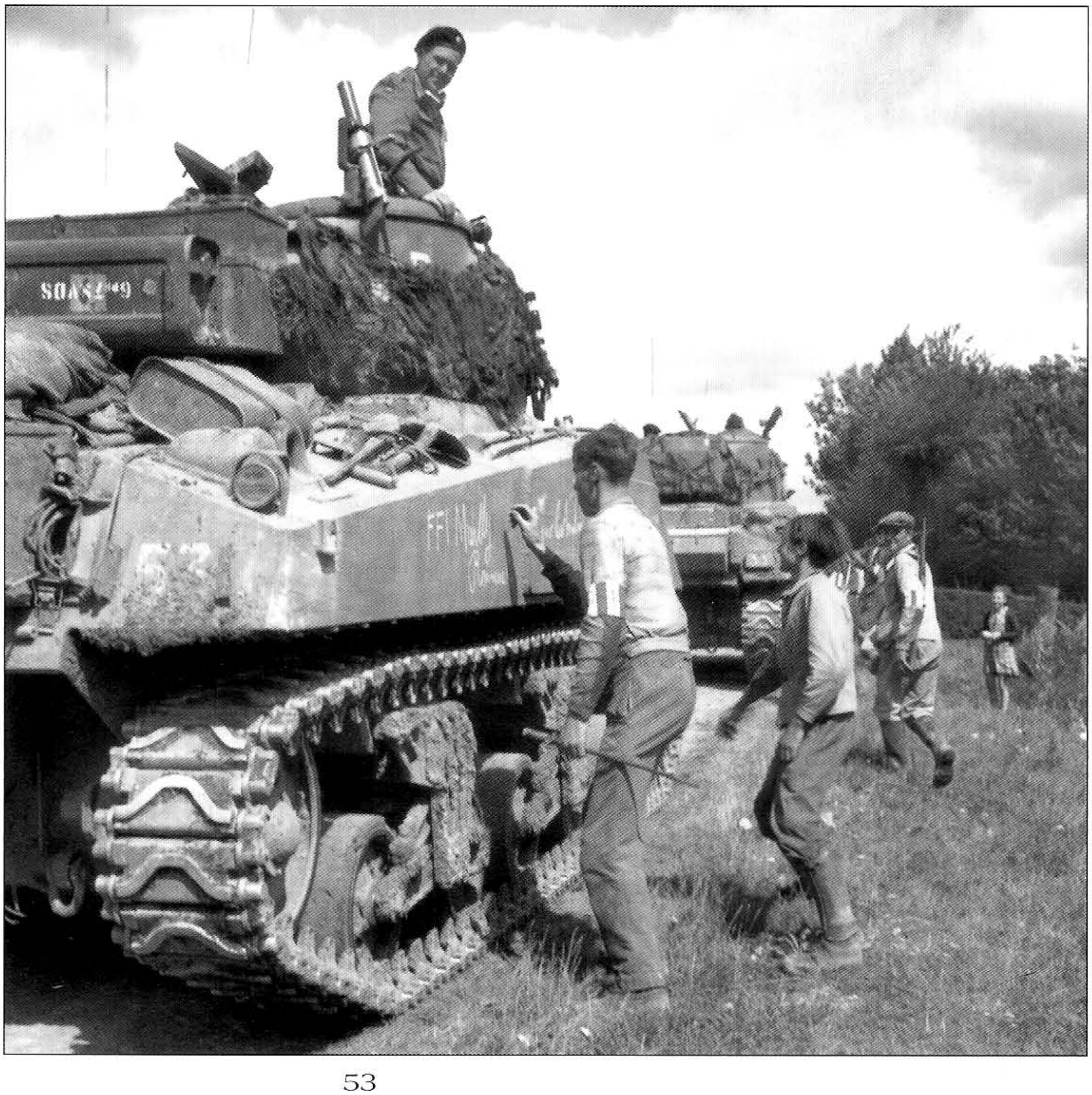
The official caption identifies this tank as a Sherman of 11th Armoured Division near Les Thillers-en-Vexin, however its markings are quite unlike any other seen for that formation. While the dark patches may at first be taken to be stains, the tank in the far background displays an almost identical pattern. Also unusual is the placement of the appliqué armor and what look to be some kind of brackets attached to it. The presence of so many wireless aerials around the tank, six can be counted just behind it, may indicate that this was a command tank attached from another unit. 31 August 1944. (IWM B9821)



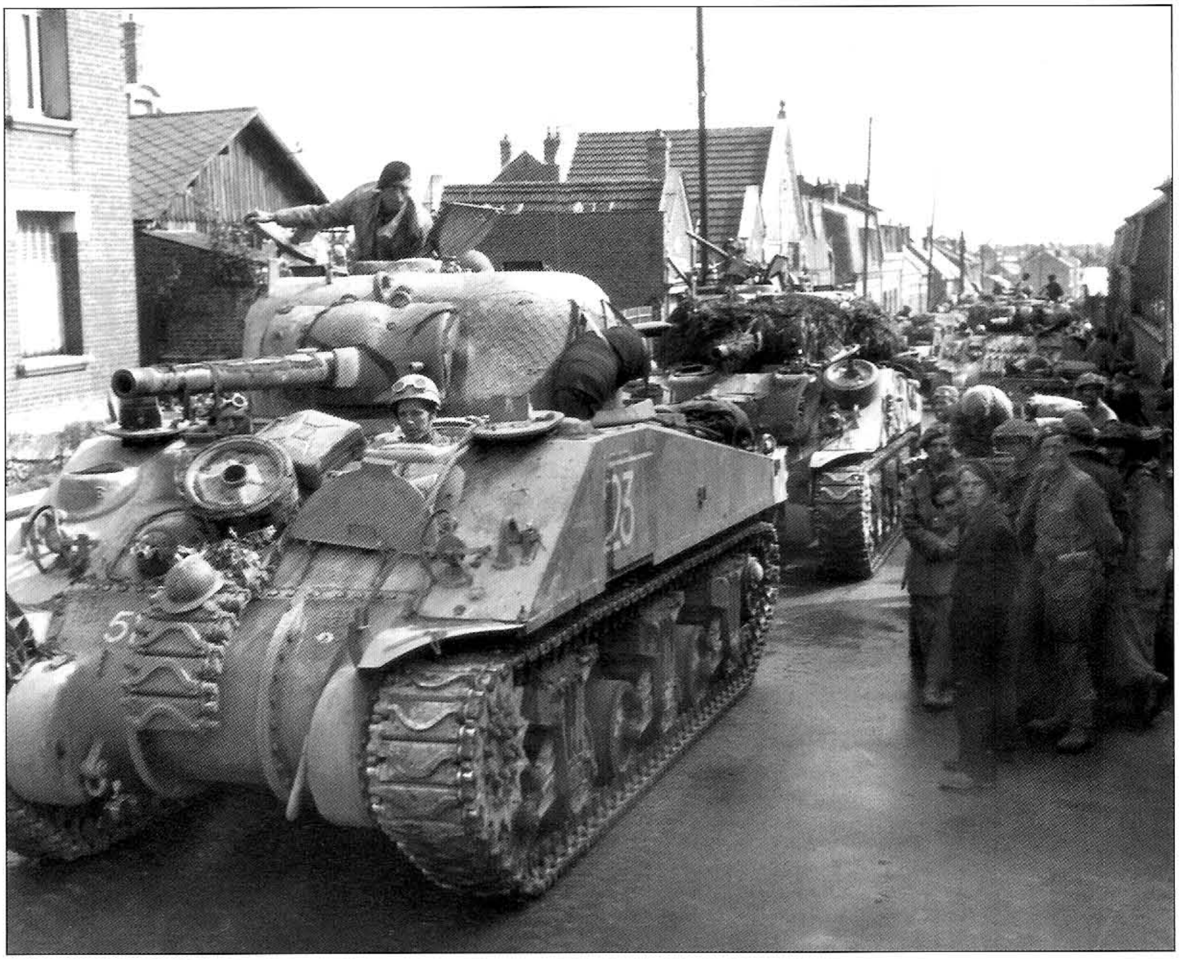
Sherman tanks, an ARV and M3 halftrack of the Grenadier Guards passing through Les Thilliers-en-Vexin. 31 August 1944. (IWM BU288)



A Sherman Hybrid I Firefly of 2nd Armoured Irish Guards. The fine camouflage mesh material was a common feature on tanks of this battalion. 31 August 1944. (IWM BU302)

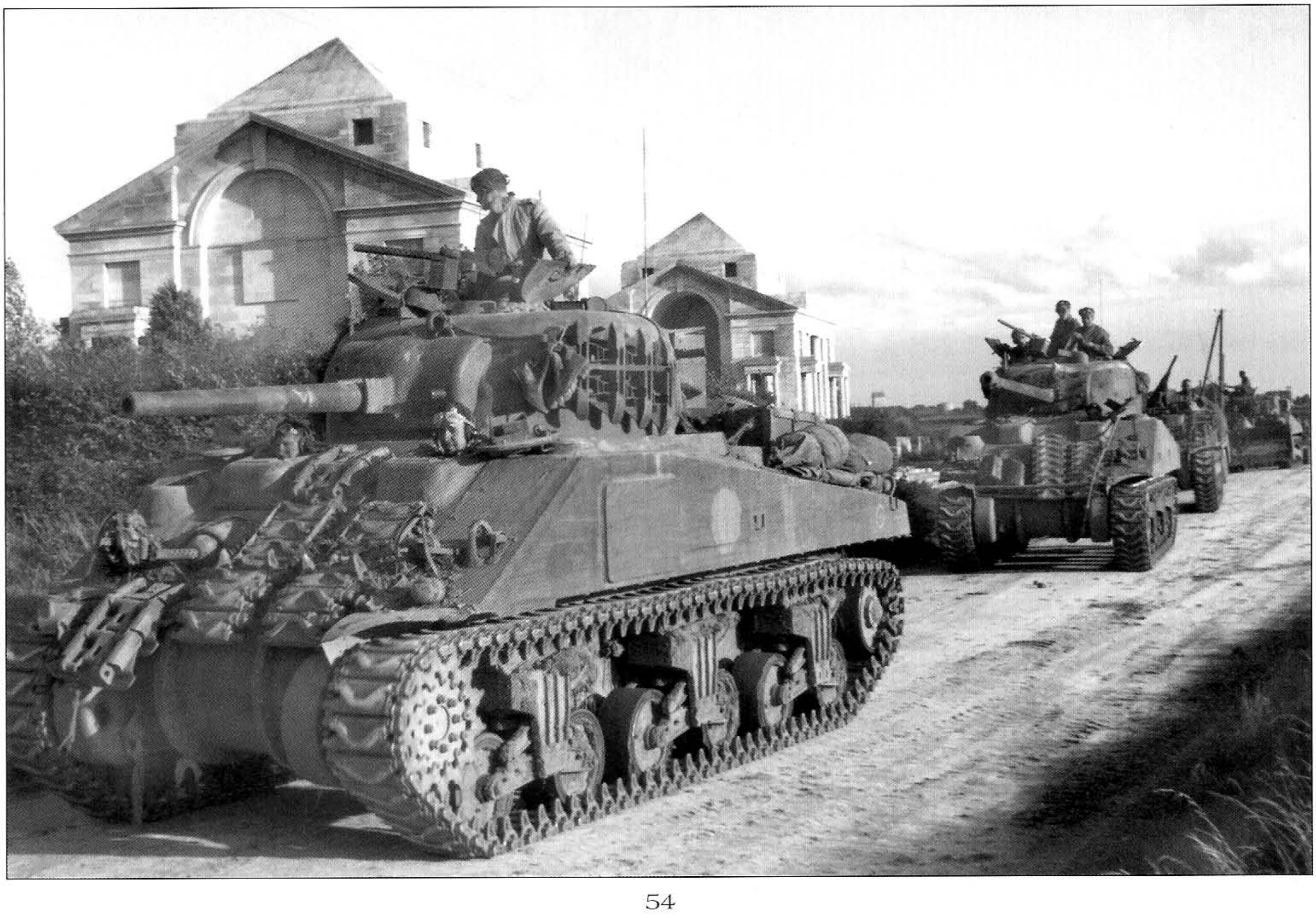


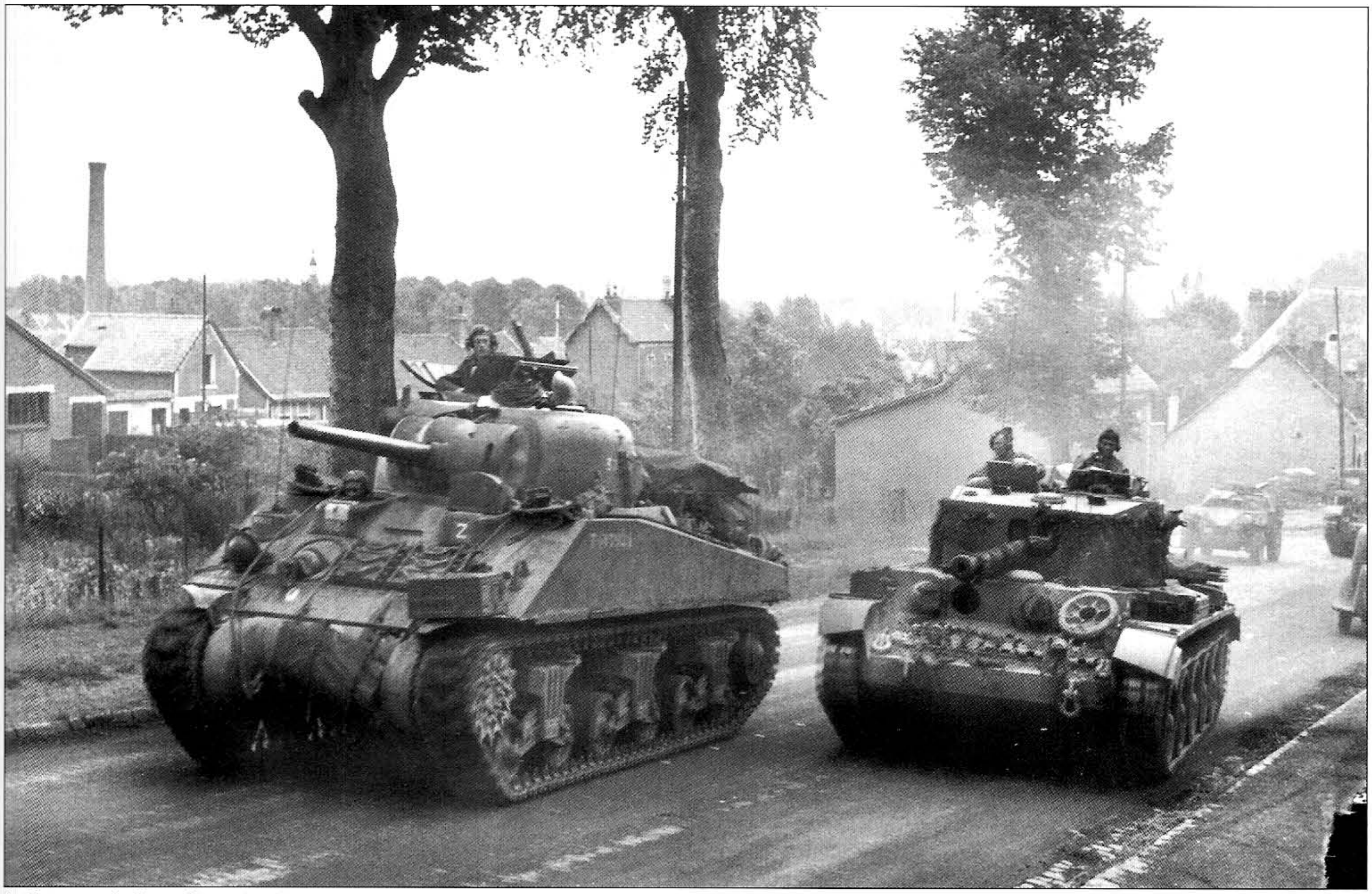
Members of the FFI chalk slogans, including their unit name, on the side of Sherman tanks of 2nd Irish Guards. The nearest tank is a Sherman V and the AoS of the junior regiment can be seen despite a covering of mud. 31 August 1944. (IWM BU303)



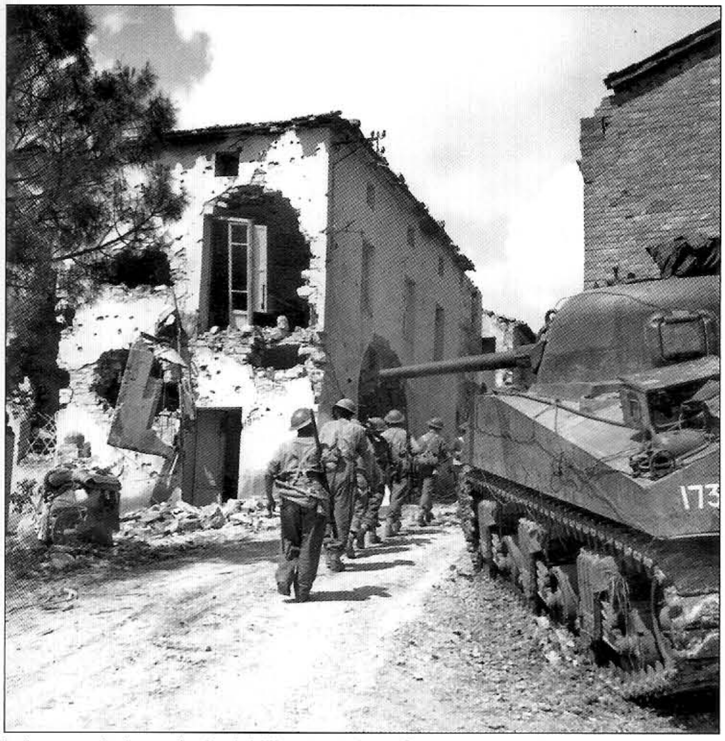
Sherman tanks of the 2nd Grenadier Guards passing through Villers-Bretonneux. This was the senior regiment of 5th Guards Armoured Brigade as evidenced by the AoS sign of white 51 on a red square visible on the left of the transmission cover. The Guards Division formation badge of the Ever-watchful Eye can be seen on the right. The Grenadier Guards did not use squadron signs but rather a system whereby the tanks were number sequentially throughout the battalion. 1 September 1944. (IWM BU268)

Sherman tanks, an ARV and a Dozer of Guards Armoured Division passing through Fouilloy on their way to Arras. The replacement of the large .50 cal machinegun with the smaller and lighter .30 cal was common in British Shermans at this time. Lengths of Churchill track have been attached to the tank nearest the camera. 1 September 1944. (IWM BU272)

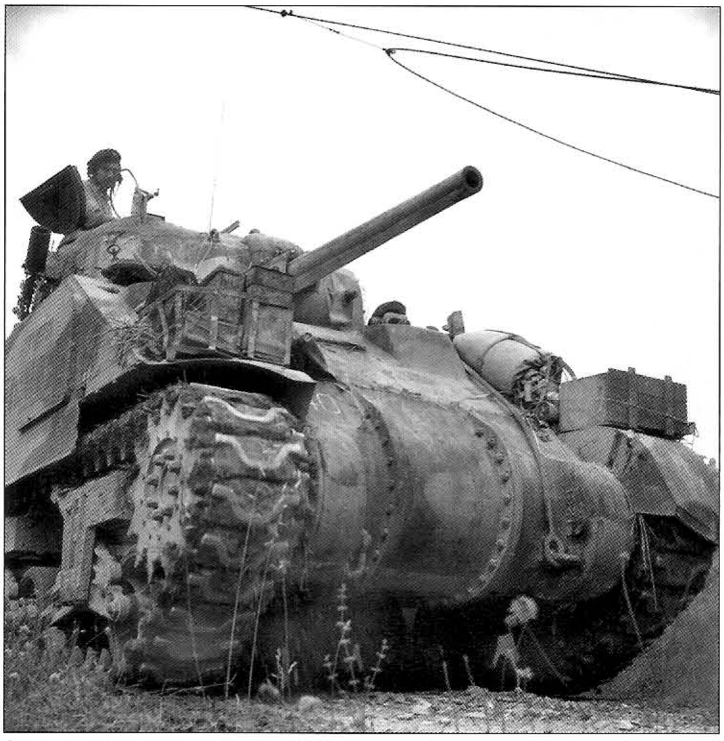




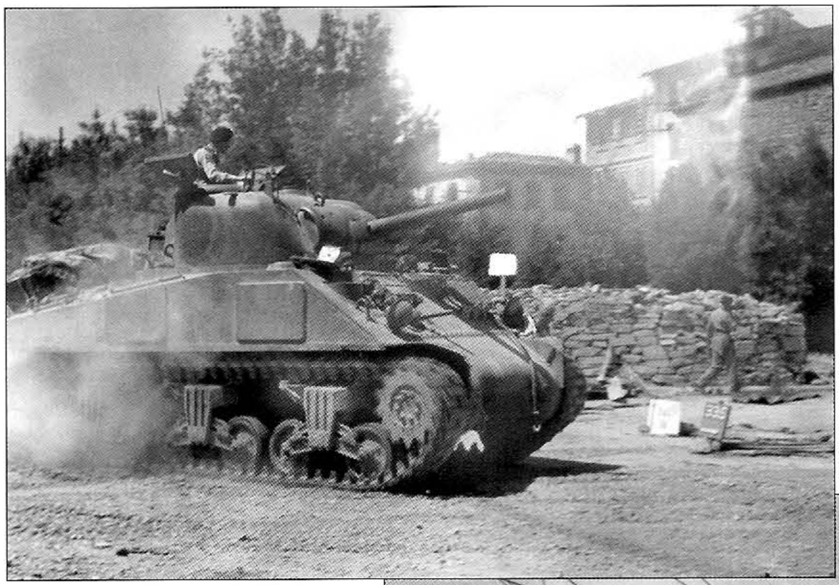
A Sherman Artillery OP tank of 3rd Regiment Royal Horse Artillery and a Cromwell move through Doullens. A combined 7th Armoured Division formation badge and AoS of a white 74 on a red over blue square, denoting the senior Field Artillery Regiment of an Armored Division, can be seen in front of the lap gunner's hatch. In front of the driver's hatch is a similar square with a white Z indicating RHQ. The division's badge seems to have been repeated just under the hull machinegun. 2 September 1944. (IWM BU434)



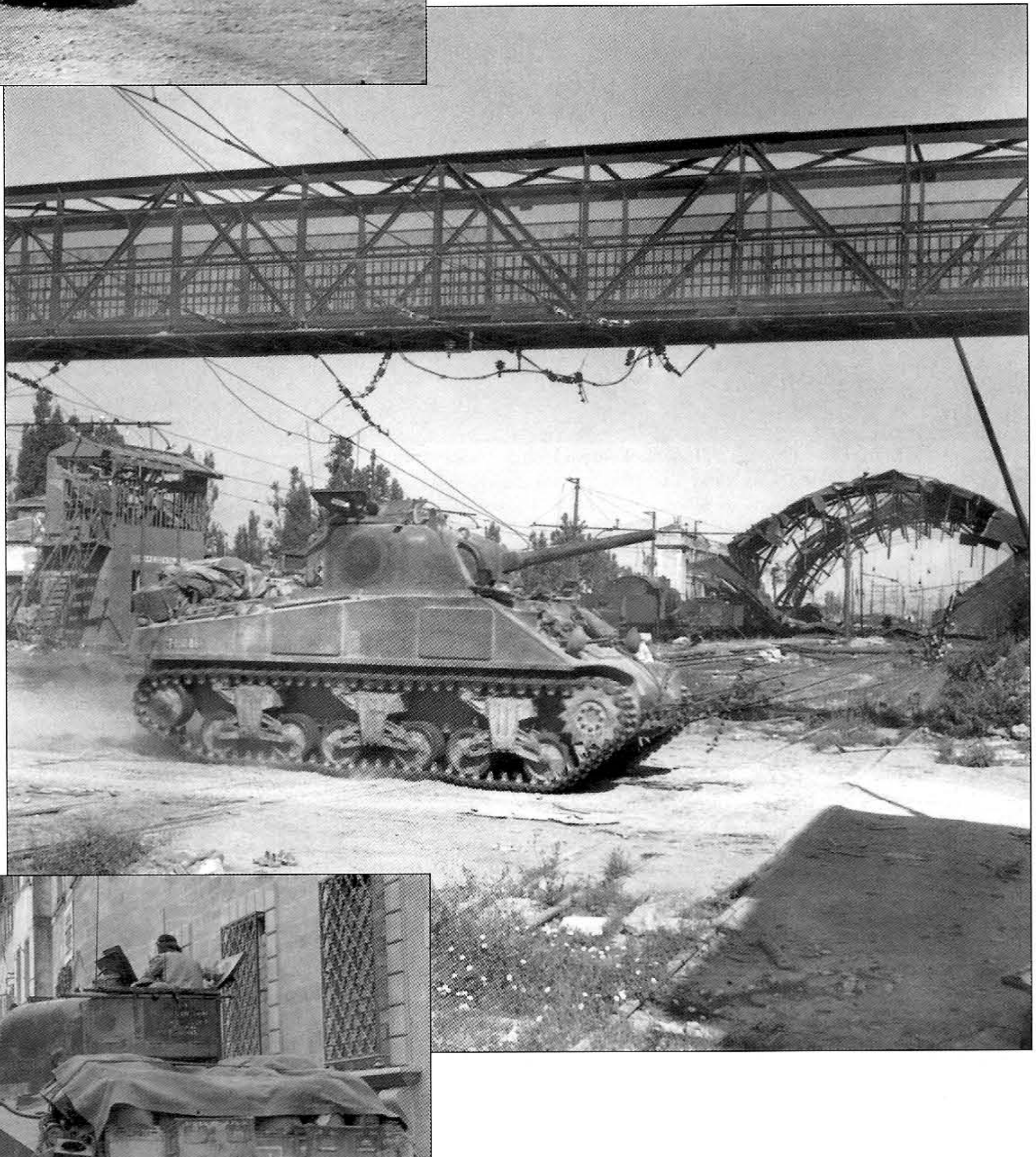
Infantry of the 6th Inniskillings and a Sherman tank advance through Pucciarelli, Italy. This tank may belong to 12th RTR of 21st Army Tank Brigade which arrived in Italy in May 1944. The AoS sign used by 12th RTR of a white 173 on a yellow over red square was however very similar to that used by the Canadian Ontario Regiment whose colors were blue over red, the number being the same. 25 June 1944. (IWM NA16442)



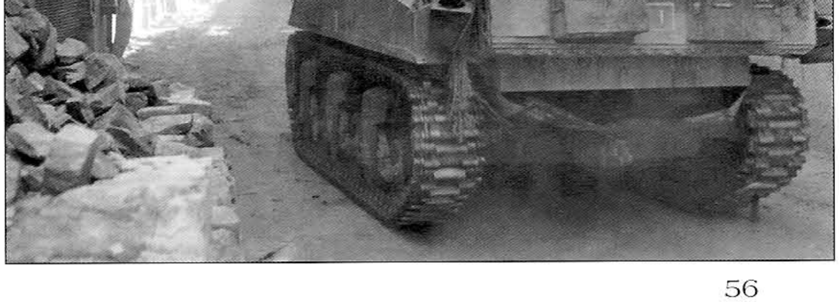
Sherman tank of B Squadron, 3rd Hussars, 9th Armoured Brigade, in Italy. This tank retains its Light Mud and Black/Dark Green camouflage seen on the Brigade's tanks in Syria in late 1943. Also still visible, although illegible and much faded, are the remnants of a name painted in large red letters on the hull side. Barely visible on the turret side is a B Squadron sign enclosing a 1, presumably the troop number. 7 July 1944. (IWM NA16755)



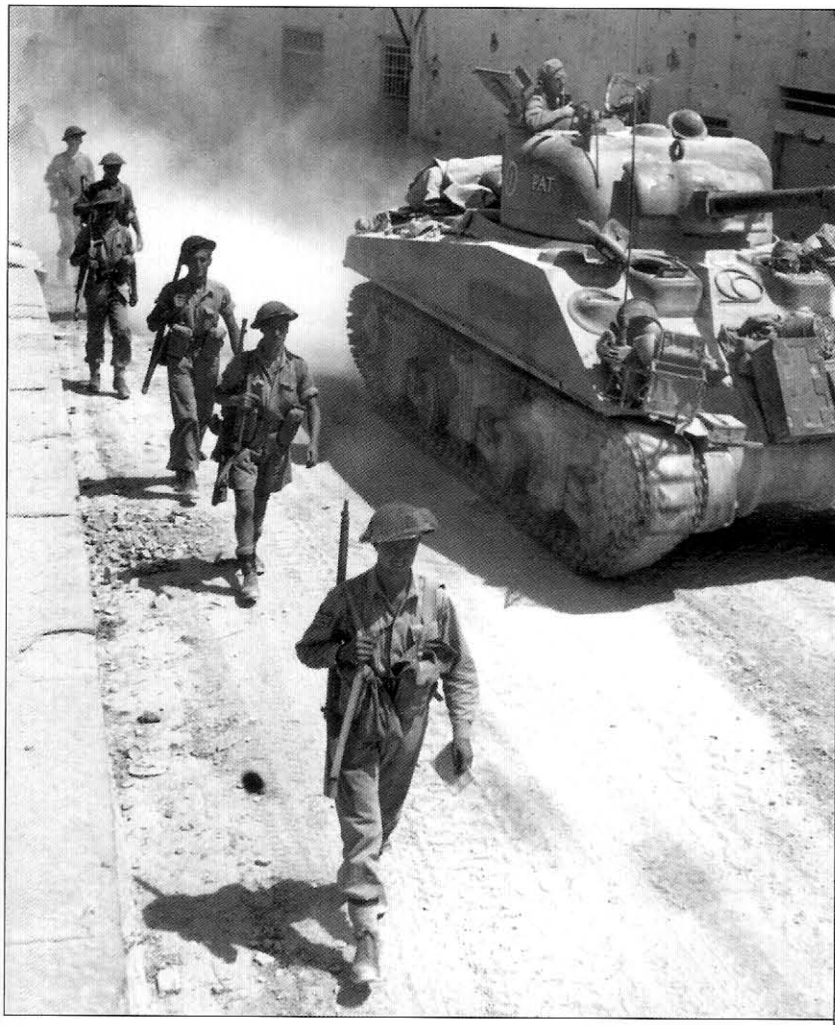
Sherman tank of 16th/5th Lancers, 26th Armoured Brigade, 6th Armoured Division in Arezzo, Italy. This tank has been previously identified as belonging to a Canadian regiment, however the 1st Armoured Division's shoulder patch as worn by the commander is quite unmistakable. 16 July 1944. (IWM NA16963)



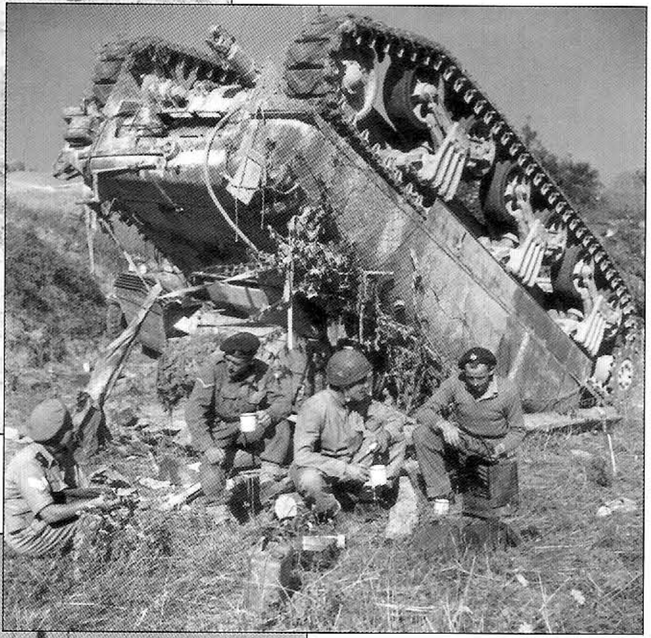
The same tank shown in the previous photo although the markings here are clearer. The large C Squadron circle on the turret side encloses 5L, the significance of whish is unknown, in the yellow of a second senior regiment. Note that the inside of the circle is considerably darker than the color of the tank. The WD number, T 158865 in white, is also on a darker background. A red/white/red recognition marking is carried at the center of the transmission cover. July 1944. (IWM NA16889)



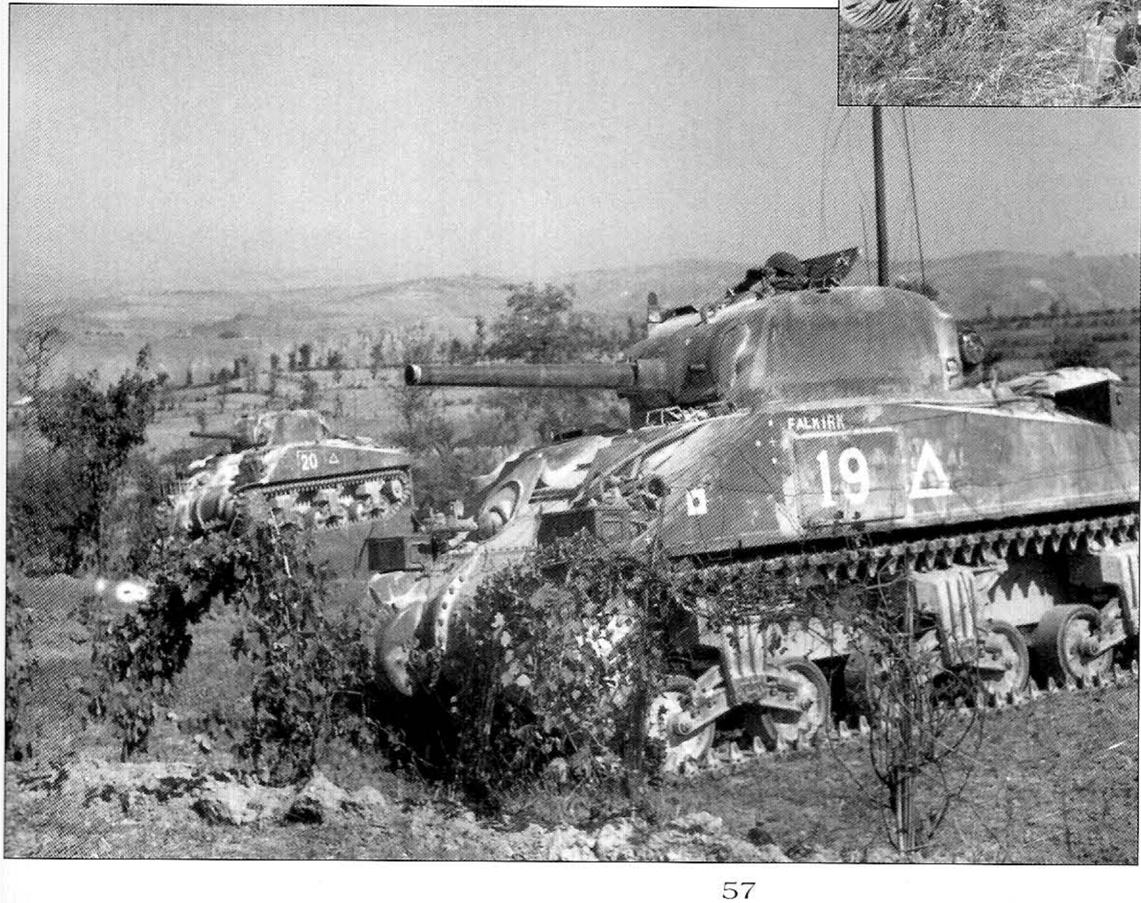
A Sherman III of 26th Armoured Brigade passing through the narrow streets of Arezzo. A very thin-edged B Squadron sign is visible on the turret side and also on the hull rear. The absence of any formation badge or AoS sign seems to have been a common feature of 6th Armoured Division's tanks from their arrival in the Mediterranean in 1942. This is a later type turret without the pistol port. 16 July 1944. (IWM NA16938)



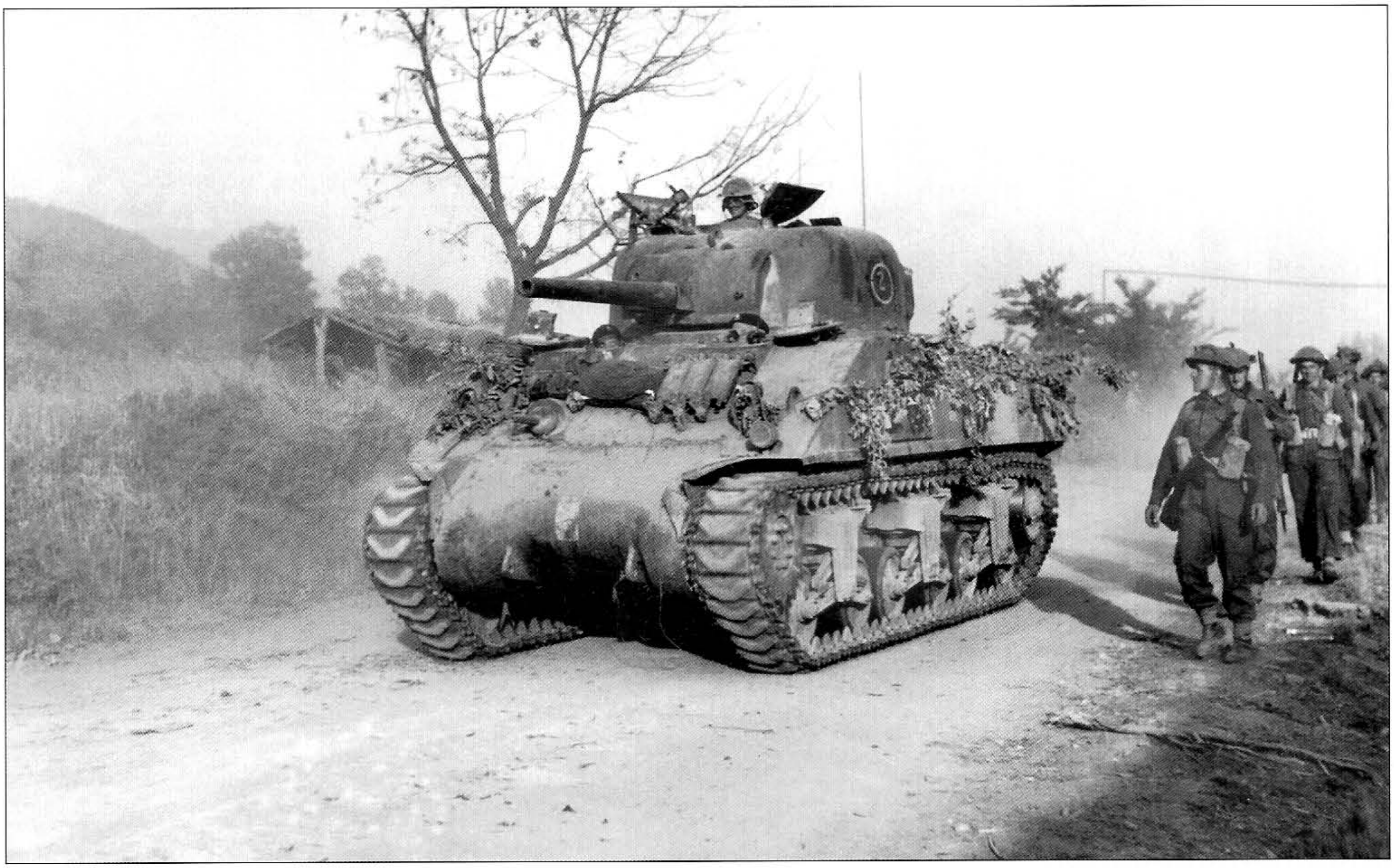
The April 1943 camouflage of a Light Mud base with Black/Dark Green disruptive pattern could be seen in Italy well into 1944. The markings however look to be much more recent and this Sherman carries the name PAT. in white, or a very bright yellow, with black drop-shading falling towards the rear. Behind the name is a C Squadron circle enclosing a letter X which, taken with the commander's and driver's Khaki berets, may indicate that this tank is attached to an artillery unit. Imprunetta, Italy. 3 August 1944. (IWM NA17567)



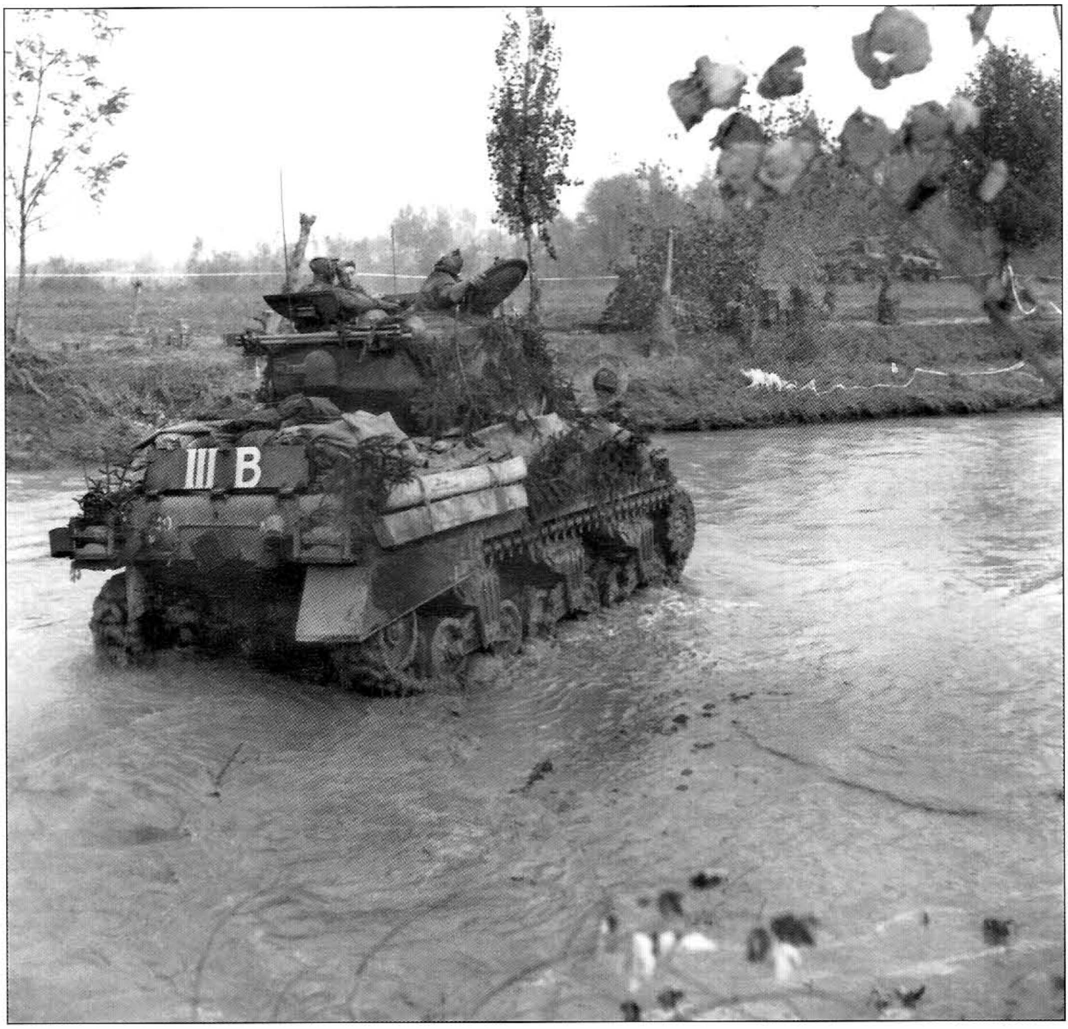
When in doubt, brew up. The crew of an upended Sherman II of 7th Armoured Brigade near the Gothic Line. Their tank overturned after slipping off a narrow road in the dark – an occurrence apparently not uncommon in Italy. 13 September 1944. (IWM NA18551)



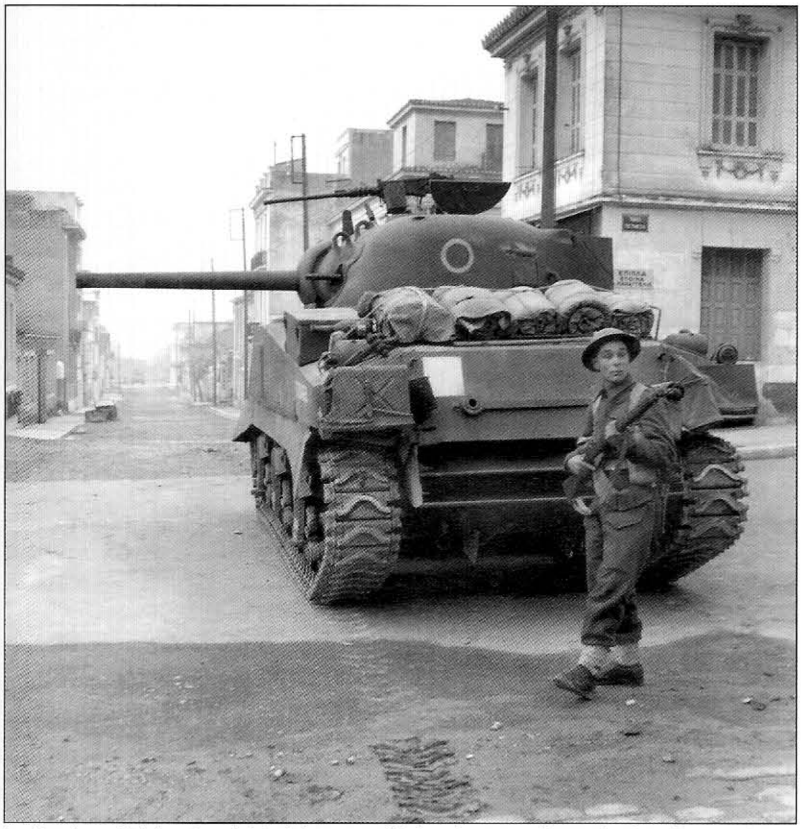
Two Sherman tanks of 6th Royal Tank Regiment in action against German machinegun positions on the walls of San Marino. The name FALKIRK can be seen above the appliqué armor on the hull side. The tanks would seem to have been numbered sequentially throughout the regiment and an A Squadron sign is also visible. Less easy to explain however are the series of small dots, squares and crosses on the hull side forward of the name and number. 19 September 1944. (IWM NA18734)



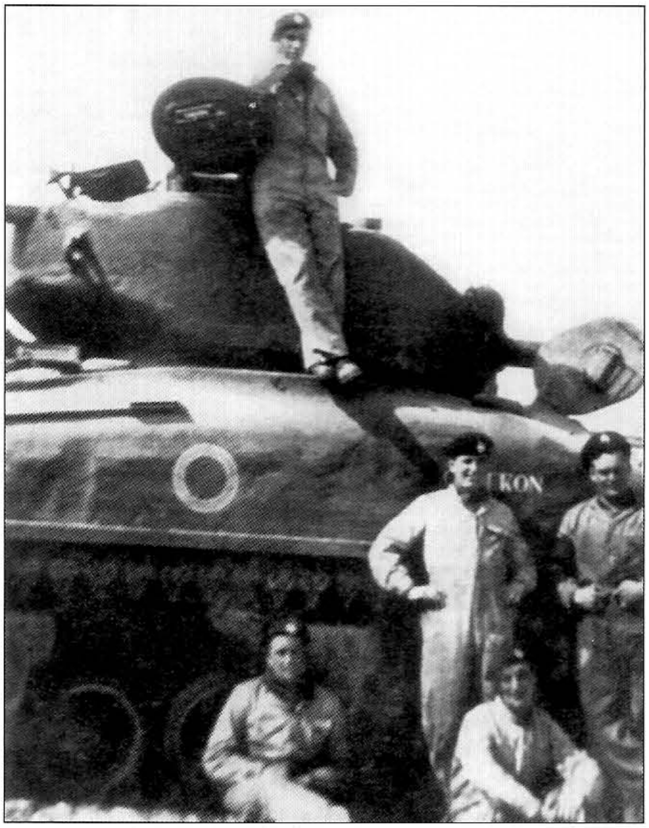
A Sherman of 17th/21st Lancer's, 26th Armoured Brigade support infantry of the 3rd Welsh Guards, Italy. November 1944. (IWM NA15664)



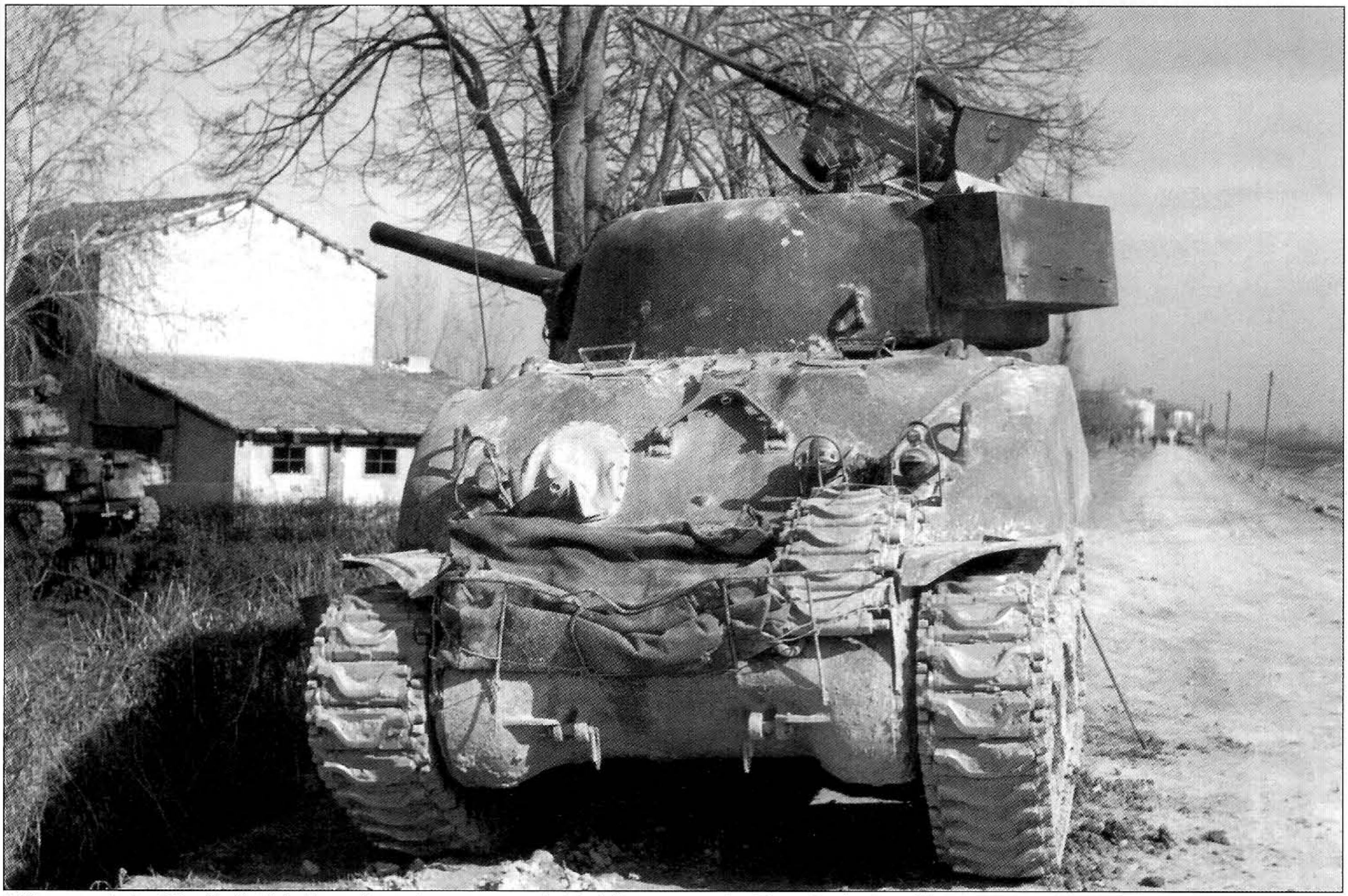
A Sherman IIA of The Queen's Bays, 2nd Armoured Brigade crossing the River Rabbi at San Martino. On the rear hull, behind the baggage and camouflage, the white 40 on a red square of the senior regiment and 1st Armoured Division's Charging Rhino formation badge can just be seen. The system of Roman numerals and letters can also be seen on the tanks of the other regiments of this brigade. 9 November 1944. (IWM NA20043)



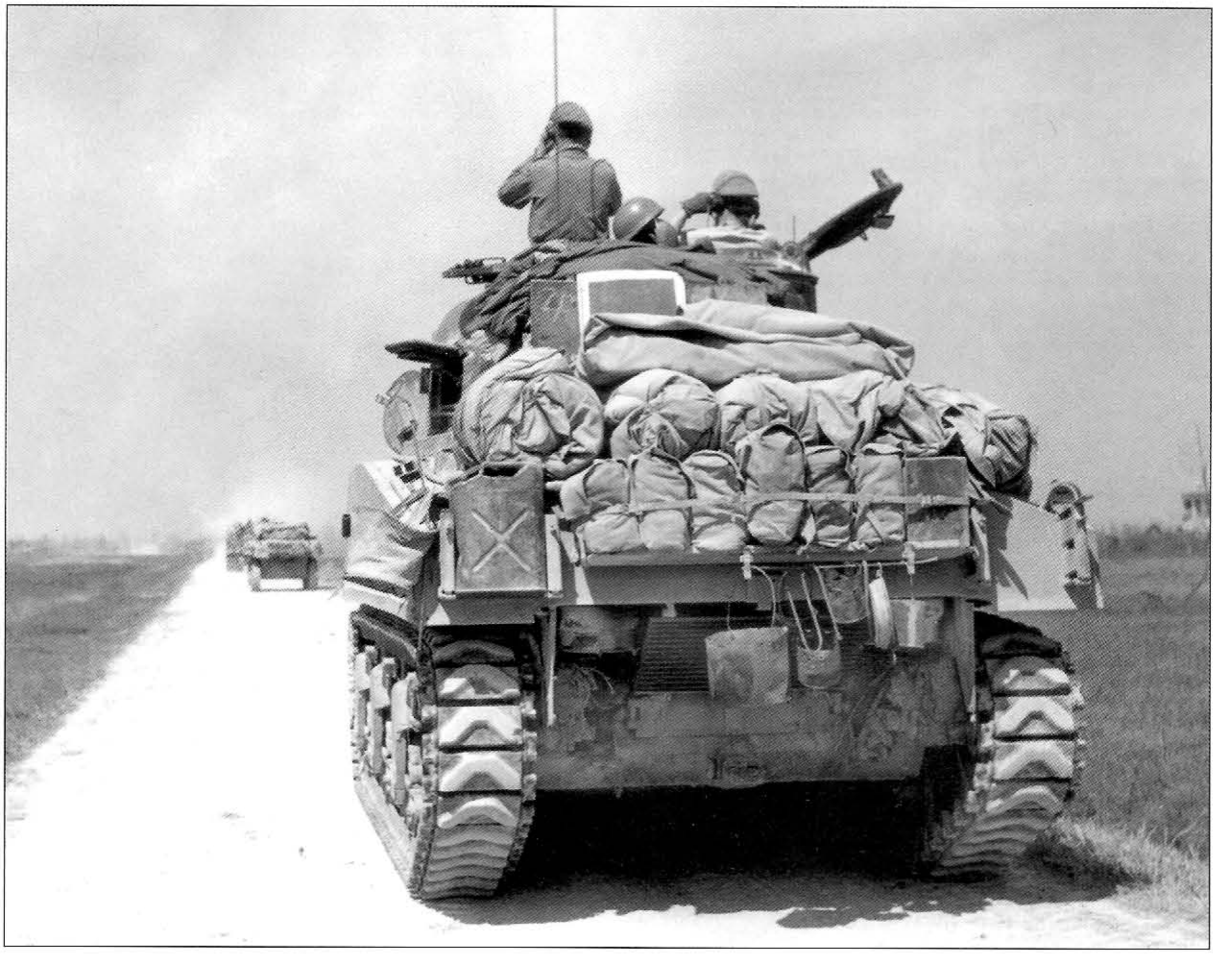
In October 1944 units of 23rd Armoured Brigade were dispatched to Greece in an effort support the Royalist Government. Here a tank of 46th RTR patrols the streets of Athens with a lone rifleman. Note that the brigade's formation sign has been replaced by a plain, white square. 18 December 1944. (IWM NA20934)



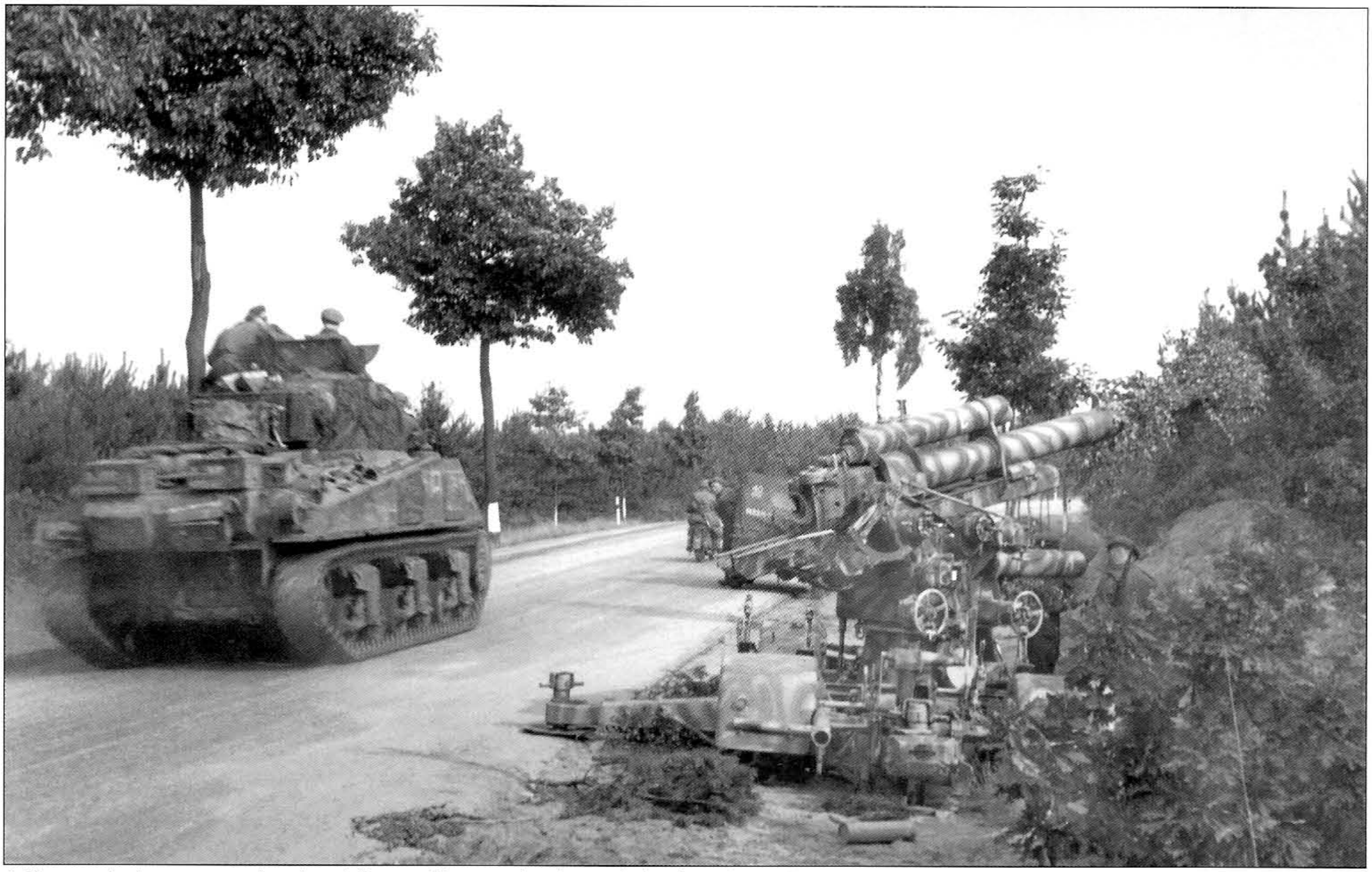
A crew from C Squadron, 2 RTR, with their Sherman IIA near Forli, Italy, in December 1944. This tank is shown and described further in the illustrations. (Photographer Lt-Col Peter Dey 2nd RTR, picture courtesy of Ian Paterson)



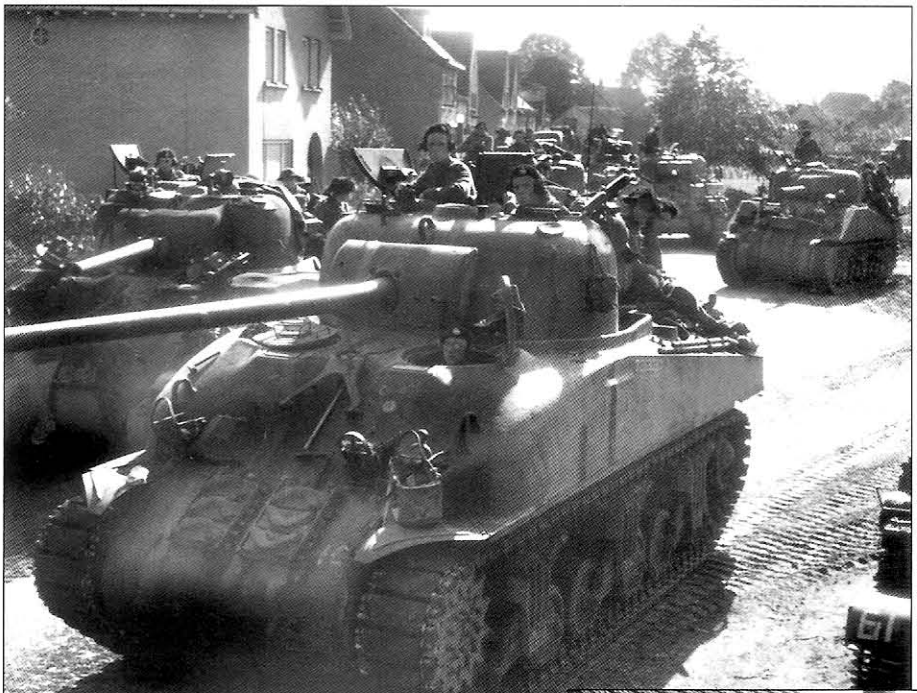
A Sherman tank of the North Irish Horse fires at enemy-occupied buildings across the River Senio, San Alberto area. At this time the regiment was part of 21st Tank Brigade. 21 February 1945. (IWM NA22499)



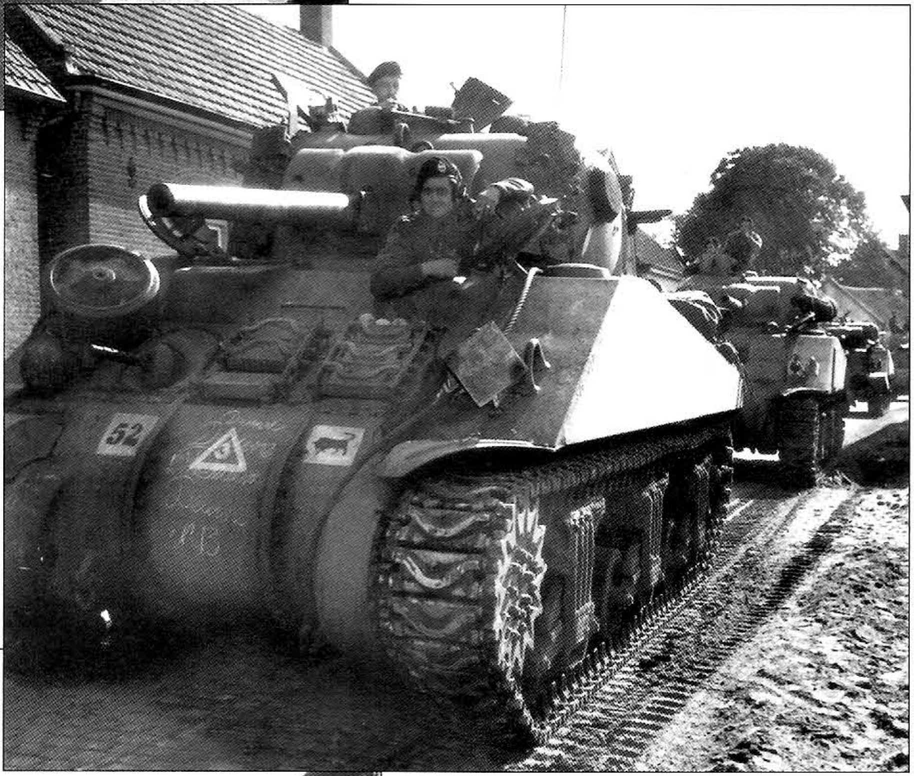
A Sherman Hybrid IC Firefly follows a converted Honey recce tank down a road in Italy. Fireflies arrived quite late in the Italian campaign. 15th Army Group records showing that none had been received by formations as late as September 1944. Of interest is the large B Squadron sign which appears to have been painted onto some kind of fabric. 11 April 1945. (IWM NA24015)



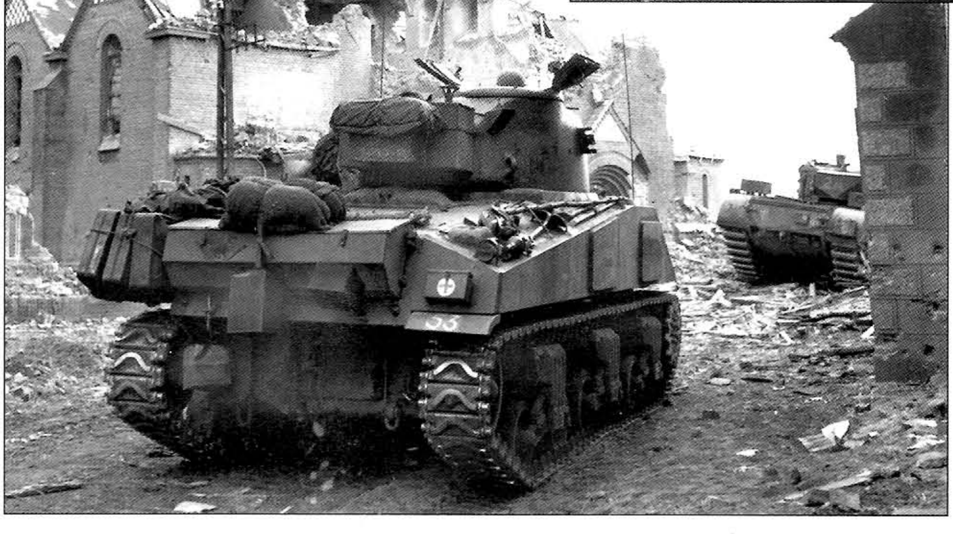
A Sherman tank passes an abandoned German 88mm anti-tank gun during the advance into Belgium. From the uniform details of the crew this may be an Artillery OP tank. 13 September 1944. (IWM BU874)



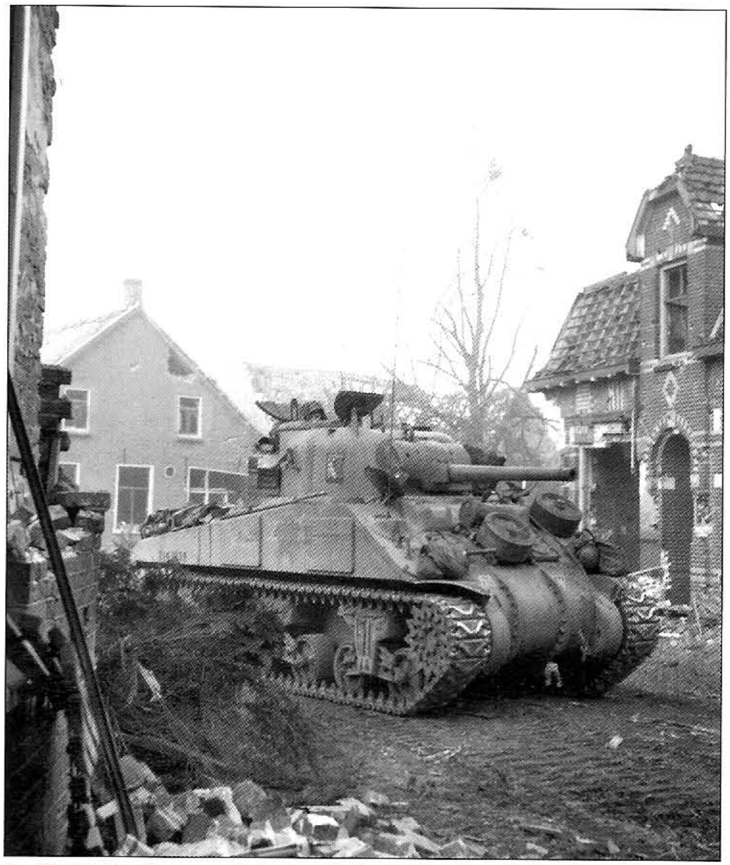
A Sherman Hybrid IC Firefly leads Sherman V's of 11th Armoured Division's 3rd RTR through Gemert. 26 September 1944. (IWM B10358)



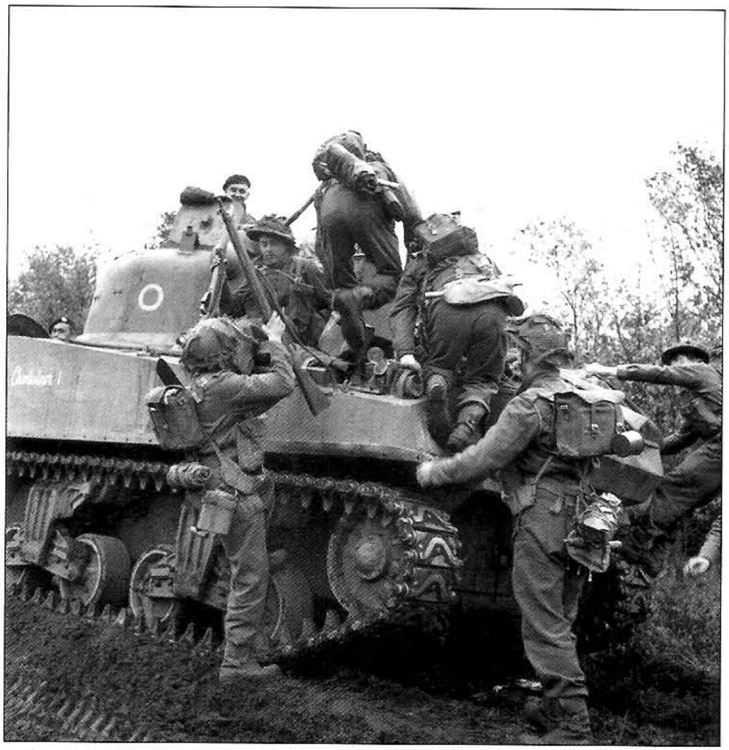
Previously identified as 23rd Hussars, these tanks are in fact of 3rd RTR of 11th Armoured Division. The AoS sign has an unusually light colored background and dark numbers. They are advancing through Deurne and the name has been written several times, in chalk, across the transmission cover. A captured German helmet acts as a cover for one of the headlights. 26 September 1944. (IWM B10359)



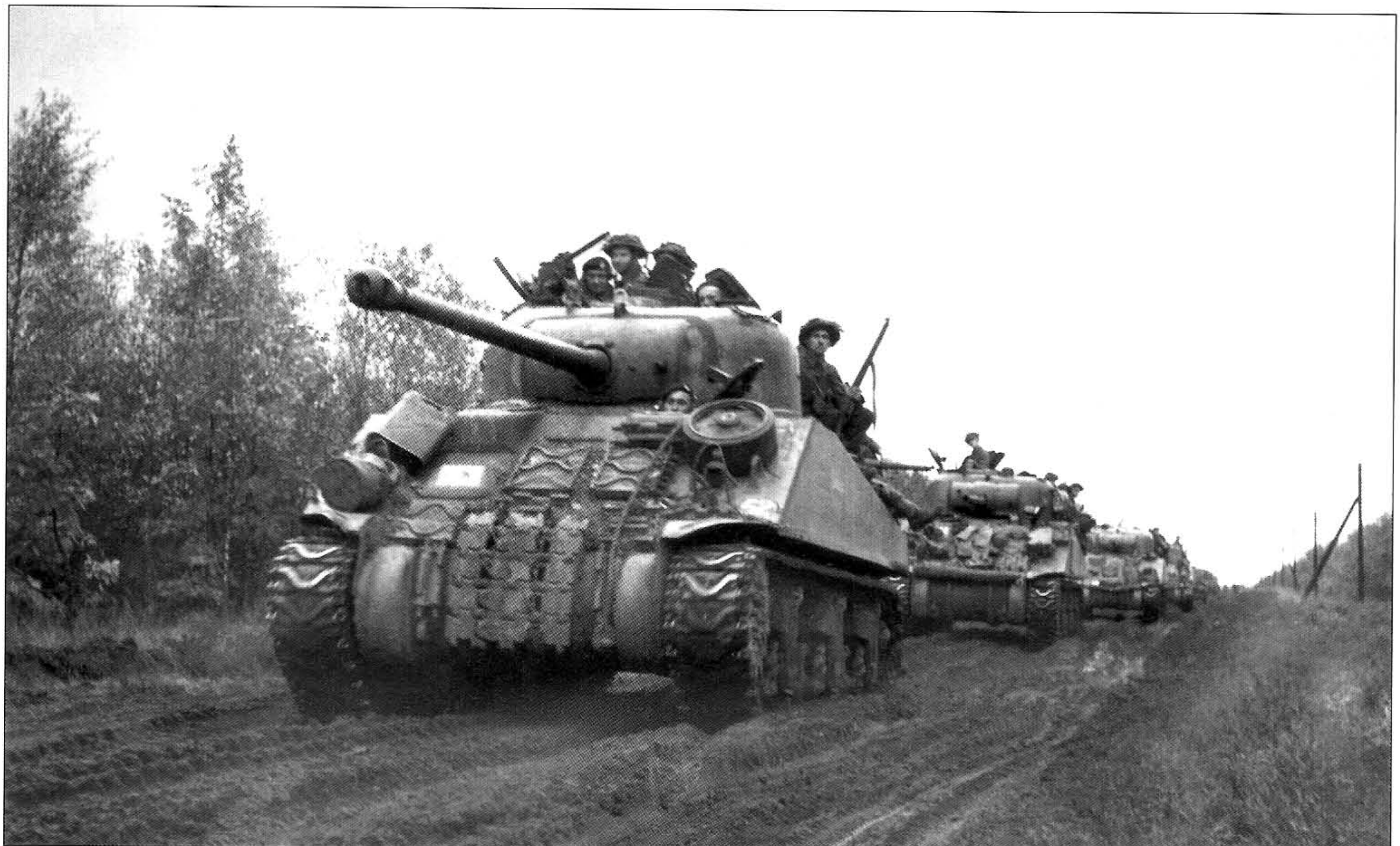
A Sherman Command tank follows a Churchill of 79th Armoured Division's 42nd Assault Regiment through Overloon during the attack by 3rd Division near the town. The Sherman is probably from 2nd County of London Yeomanry attached to 30th Armoured Brigade. 14 October 1944. (IWM B10819)



A Sherman Command tank of 2nd County of London Yeomanry (Westminster Dragoons) attached to 30th Armoured Brigade. This brigade was part of 79th Armoured Division and was equipped with Sherman Crab flail tanks. The marking on the hull is in fact a temporary attachment which indicated the weight, height and length of the vehicle. 14 October 1944. (IWM B10820)

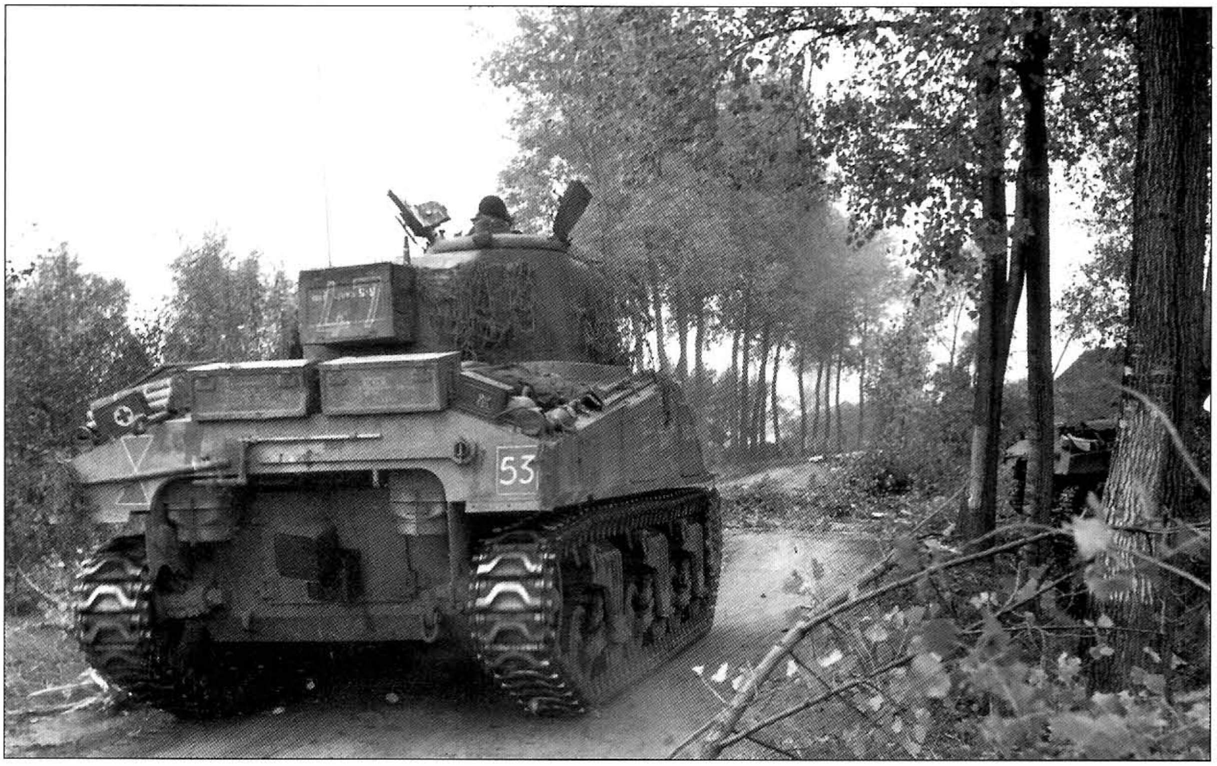


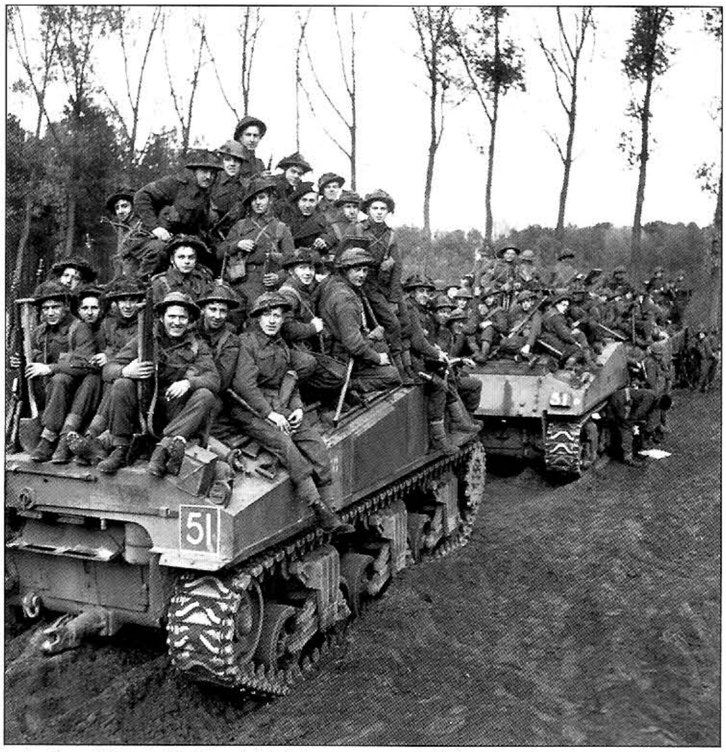
A Sherman Firefly of C Squadron, 3rd RTR near Venraij in Holland. The name Charlestown 1, in white script, can be seen just below the driver's head. In a tradition dating to the 1914-18 War, the battalion named all its tanks beginning with the letter C. 17 October 1944. (IWM BU1235)



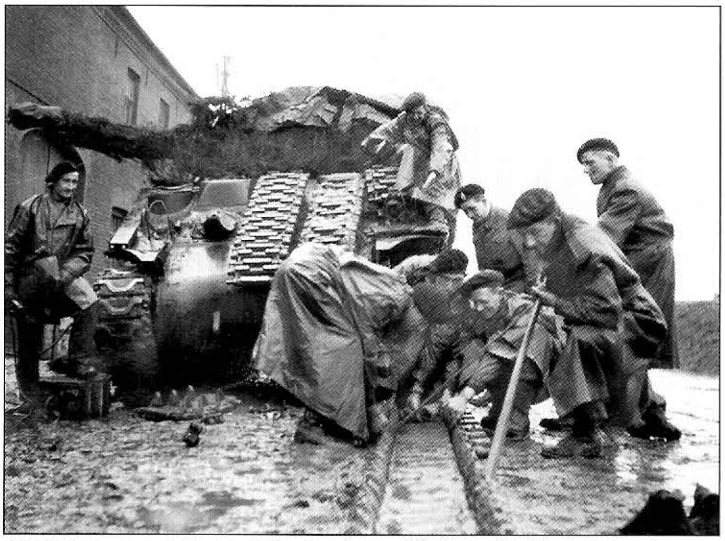
A Firefly and Sherman tanks near Venray. Although not clearly visible, the markings on the front of the Firefly appear to be those of 3rd RTR, 11th Armoured Division. An imposing piece of German track has been welded to the front. 18 October 1944. (IWM B11058)

Sherman I of 33rd Armoured Brigade's junior armored regiment, which was at this time 144th RAC, in support of 2nd Derbyshire Yeomanry during fighting on the outskirts of St Michielsgestel, Holland. Officially this independent brigade did not use the sequence of serial numbers for an armored division as shown here however the unit identification is beyond doubt. The white outline also seems to have been peculiar to this brigade. 24 October 1944. (IWM B11212)

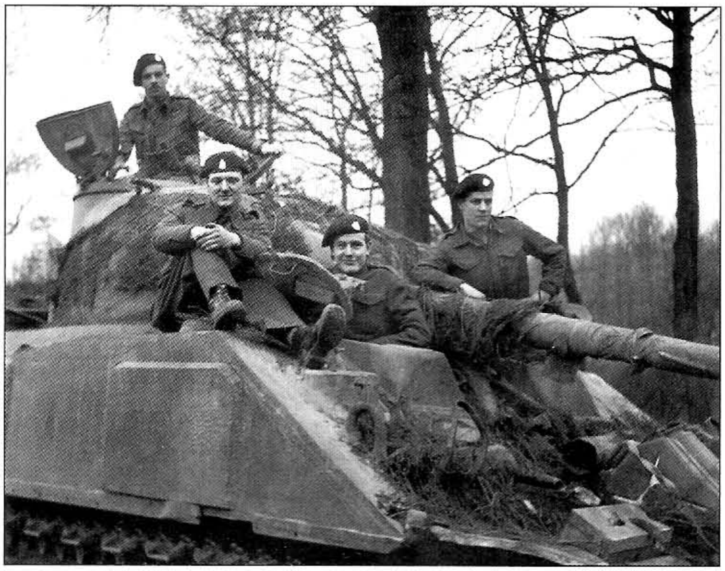




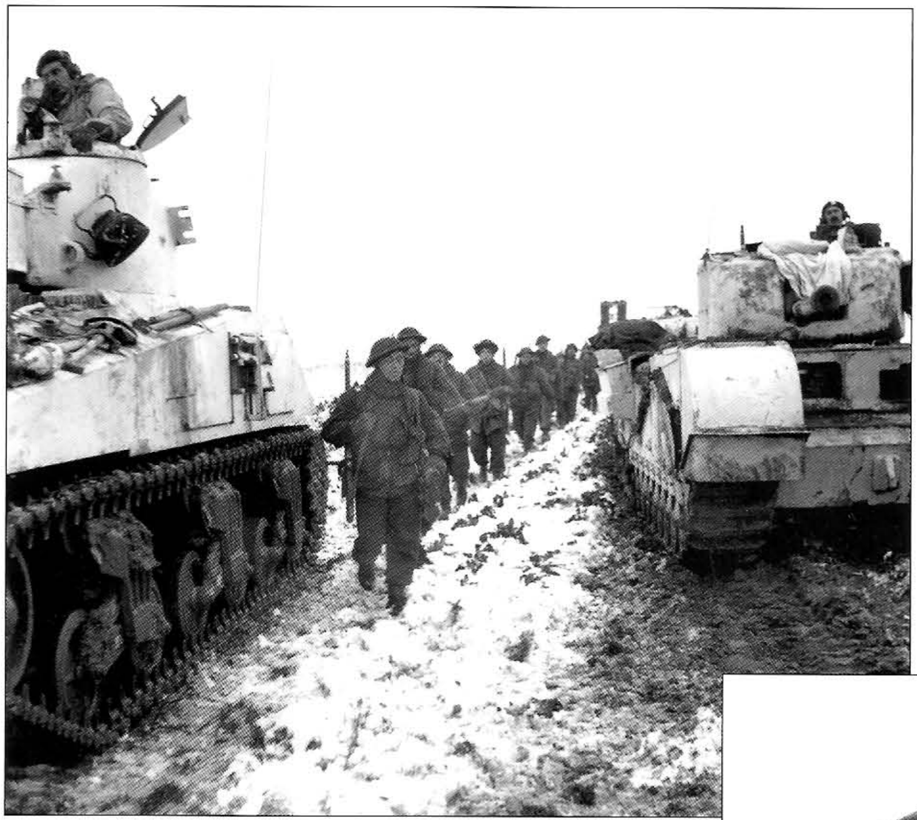
Infantry of 51st Highland Division are carried into battle aboard Sherman tanks near Udenhout. The style used to depict the AoS sign on the Sherman I, closest to the camera, is so similar to that used by 33rd Armoured Brigade that this is probably 1st Northamptonshire Yeomanry. 29 October 1944. (IWM B11457)



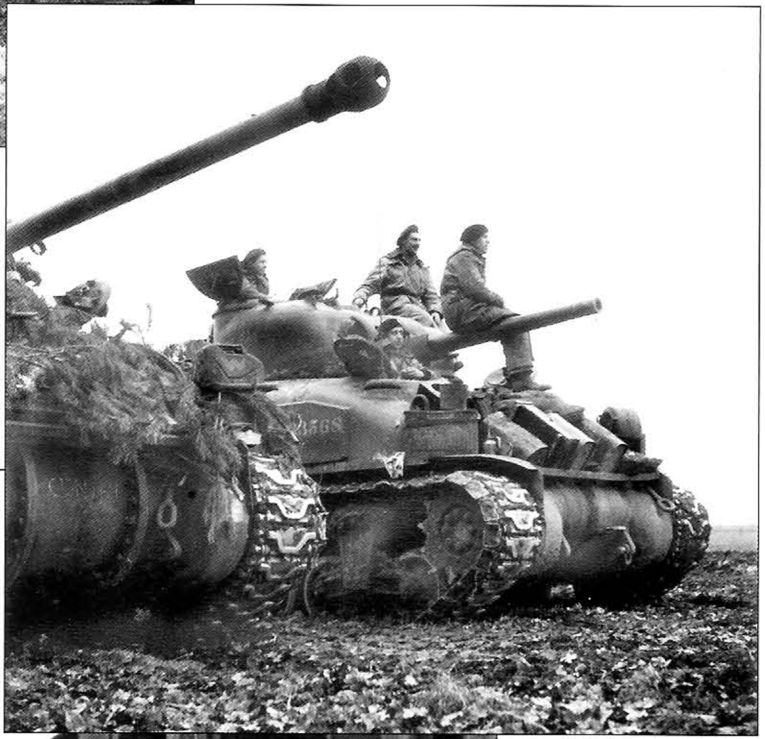
REME troops work to repair the track on a Sherman tank in heavy rain, near Geilenkirchen, 25 November 1944. (IWM B12087)



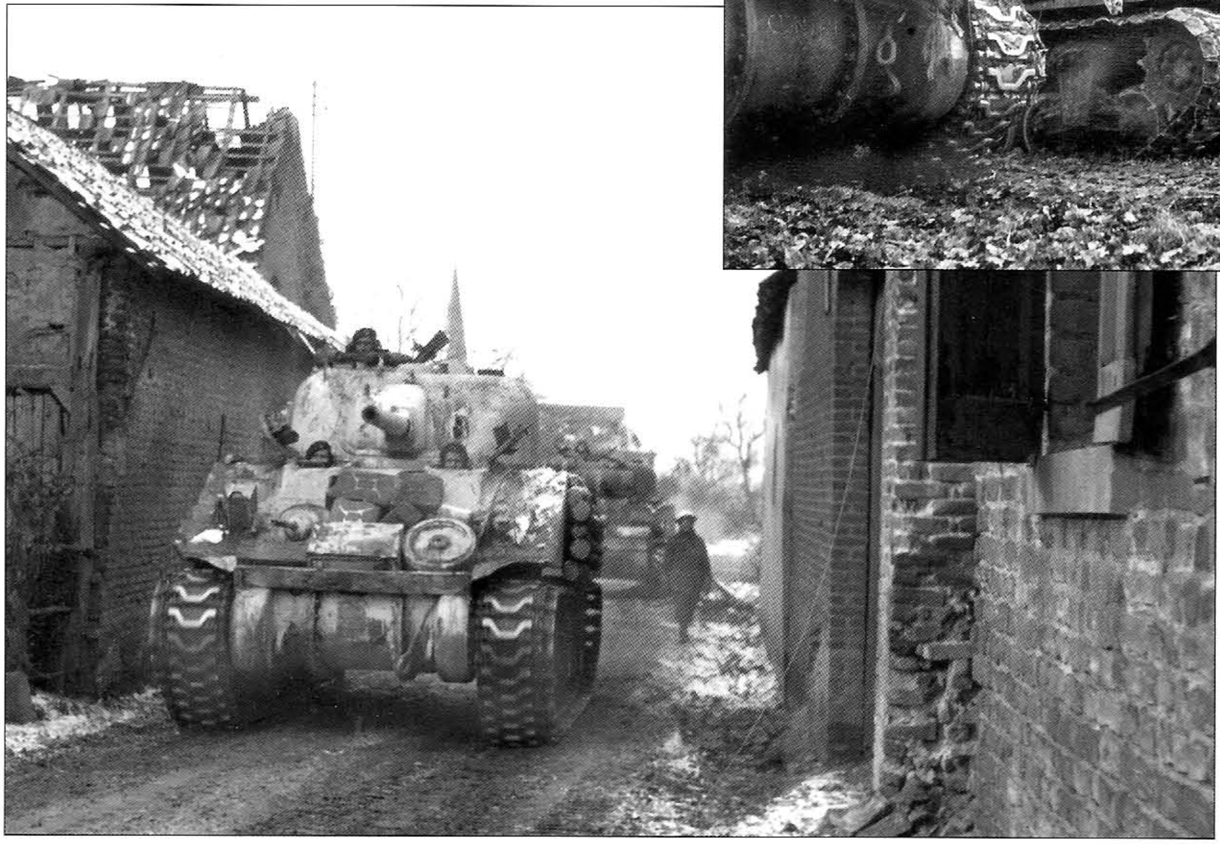
Major J K Holman (standing in the turret) of the Nottinghamshire Yeomanry (Sherwood Rangers), 8th Armoured Brigade and the crew of his tank. Major Holman's squadron had just been credited with the destruction of three Tiger tanks when this photograph was taken. 30 November 1944. (IWM B12253)



Men of 4/5th Royal Scots Fusiliers pass between a Sherman and a Churchill tank during 52nd (Lowland) Division's attack towards Stein from Tuddern. In January 1945 snow camouflage in the form of calico sheets, painted tarpaulins and finally whitewash was approved by 21st Army Group. Officially unit insignia was not to be painted over but it seems possible that 7th Armoured Division alone followed this instruction. 18 January 1945. (IWM B13788)

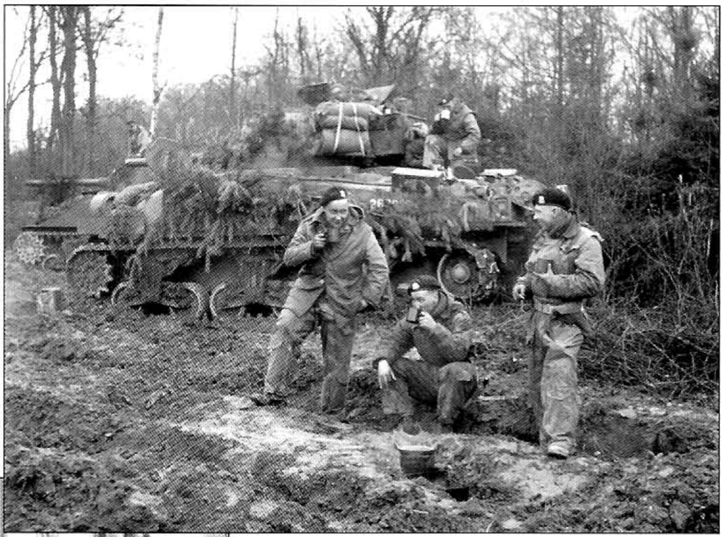


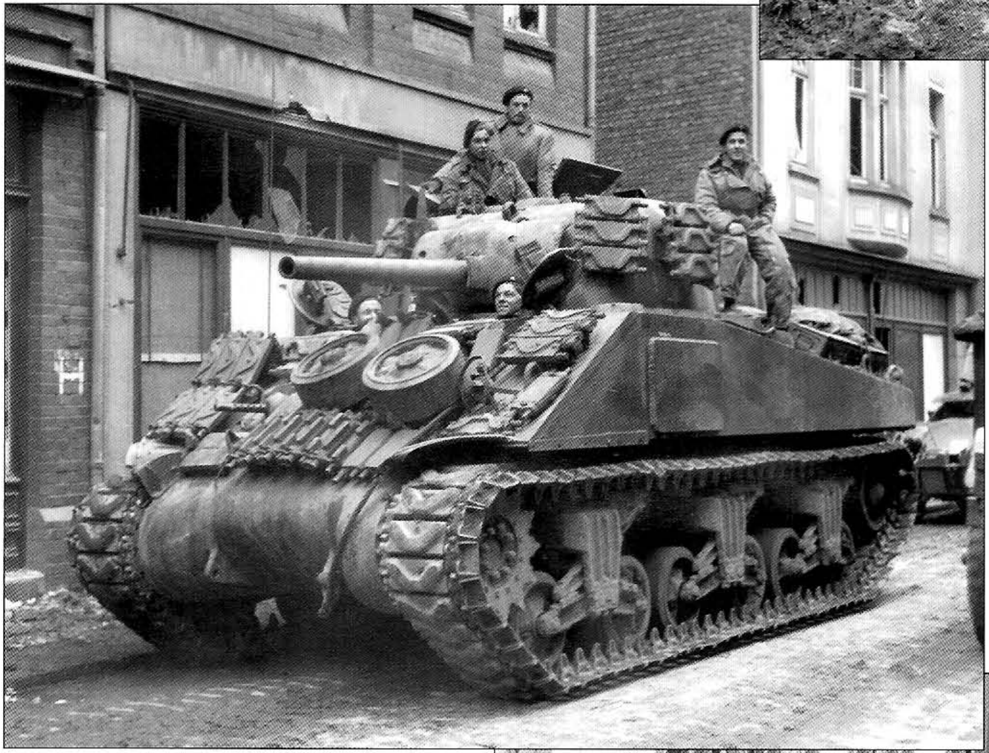
Sherman tanks of The Royal Scots Greys, 4th Armoured Brigade, waiting for the order to attack east of Goch. 27 February 1945. (IWM B14919)



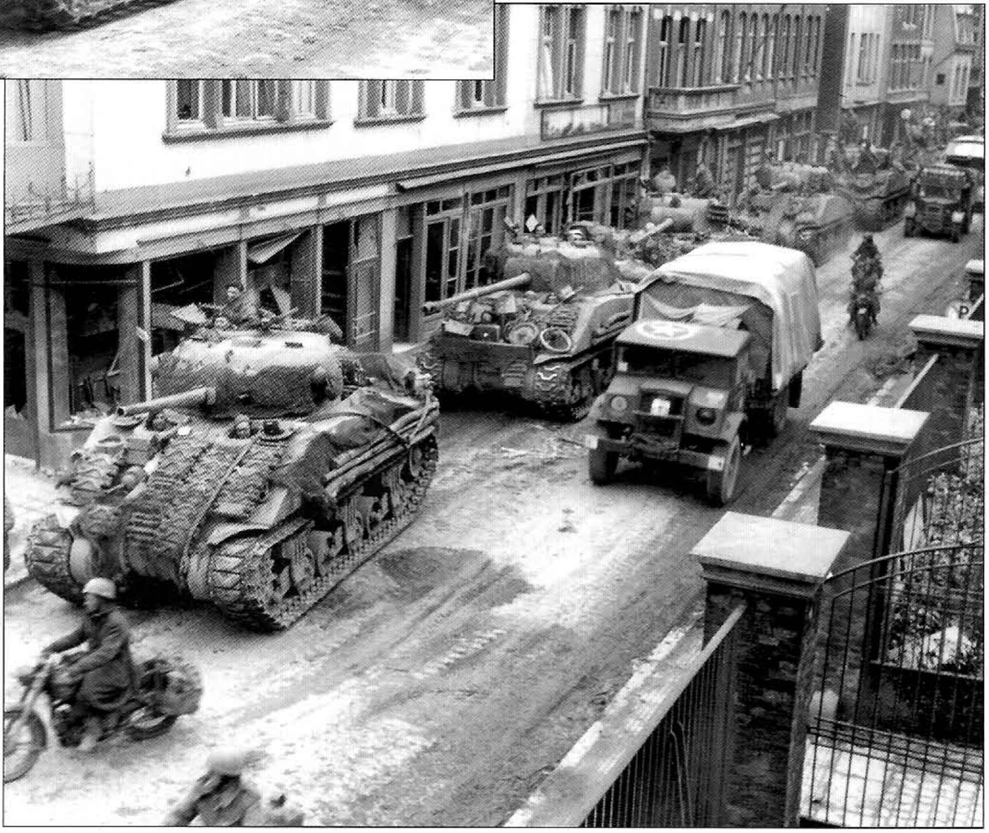
Sherman tanks of 8th Armoured Brigade in Saeffelen. The coats of whitewash received in January very quickly became worn and the second tank appears to have received none at all. 20 January 1945. (IWM B13925)

A tank crew of The Royal Scots Greys, 4th Armoured Brigade, enjoy a brew before the attack east of Goch, 27 February 1945. (IWM B14922)



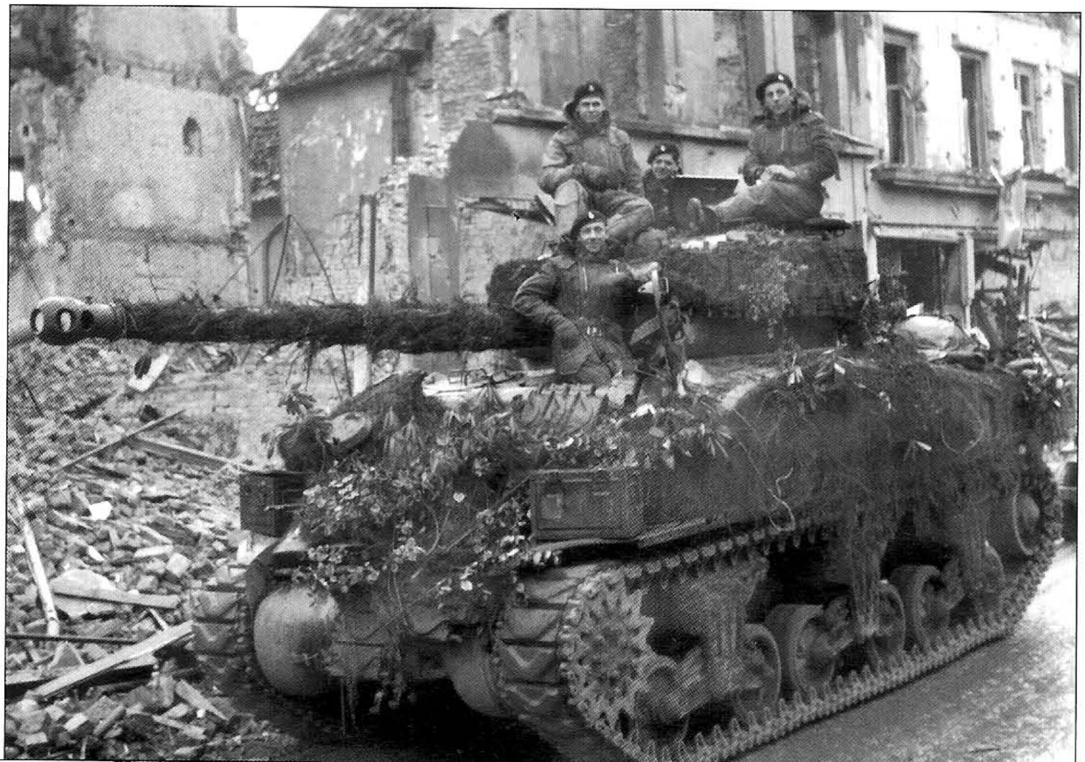


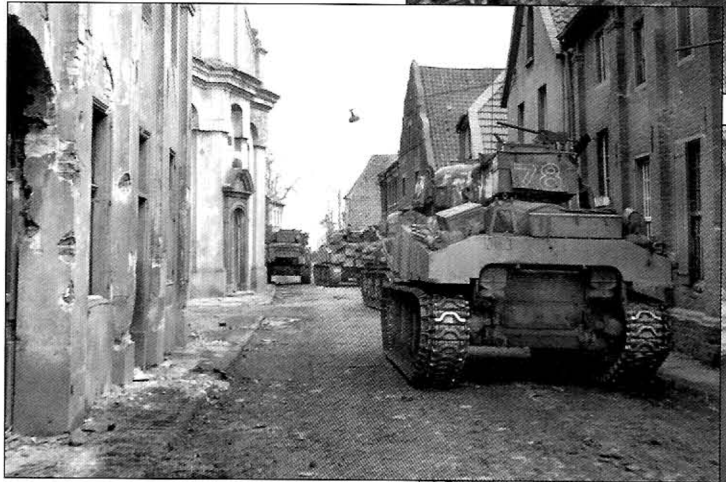
Sherman of 8th Armoured Brigade in Kevelaer, Germany. Traces of a pattern of disruptive camouflage can be seen on the hull side and this may indicate that this tank belongs to the 4th/7th Dragoon Guards. On the original photo the name LANCSHIRE can be seen, possibly in red, on a dark background just above the appliqué armor. 4 March 1945. (IWM B15145)



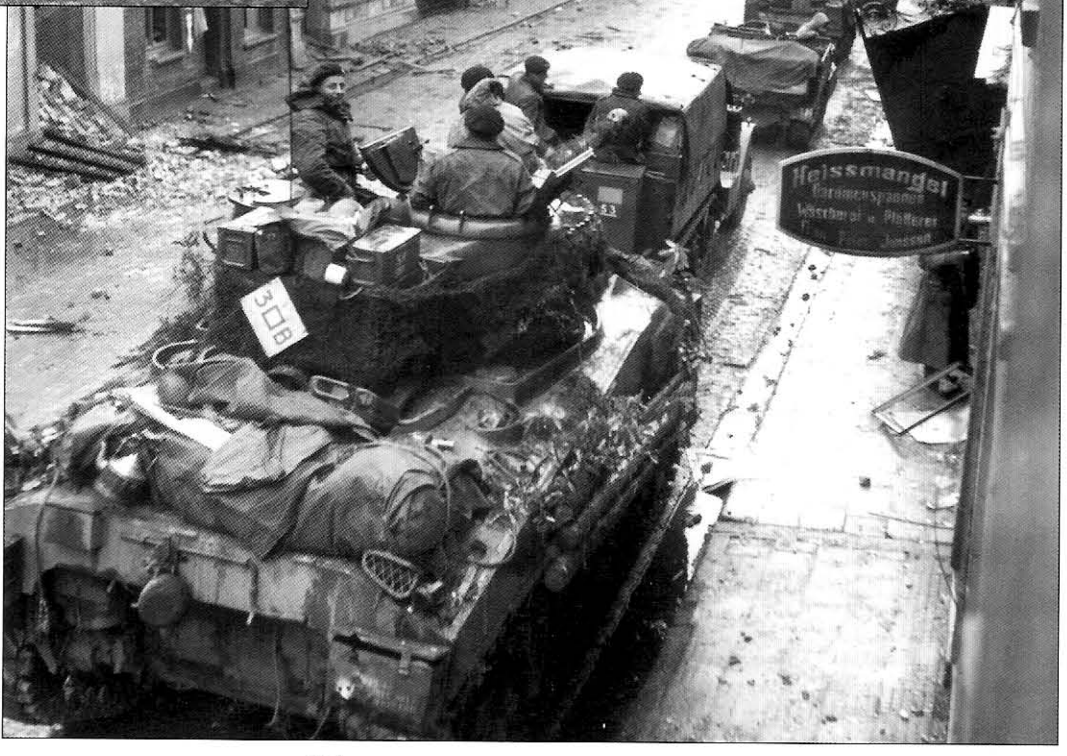
Sherman tanks and transport of 8th Armoured Brigade moving through Kevelaer. Although the tanks seem devoid of any markings the brigade's Fox Face formation badge can just be made out on the lorry in the center. 4 March 1945. (IWM B15147)

A Sherman Hybrid IC Firefly drives into Geldern. Although identification is not possible the cap badge resembles that of the 5th Inniskilling Dragoon Guards who were at this time the senior armored regiment of 22nd Armoured Brigade. 6 March 1945. (IWM B15229)



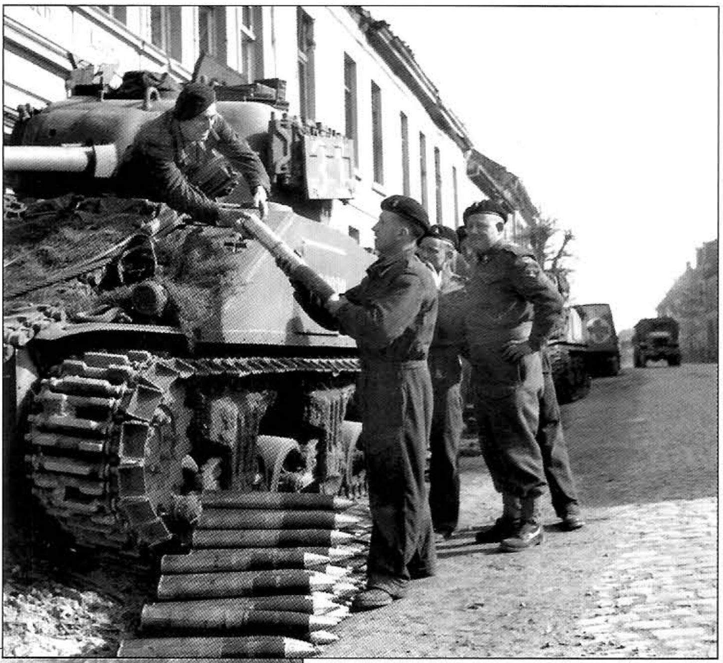


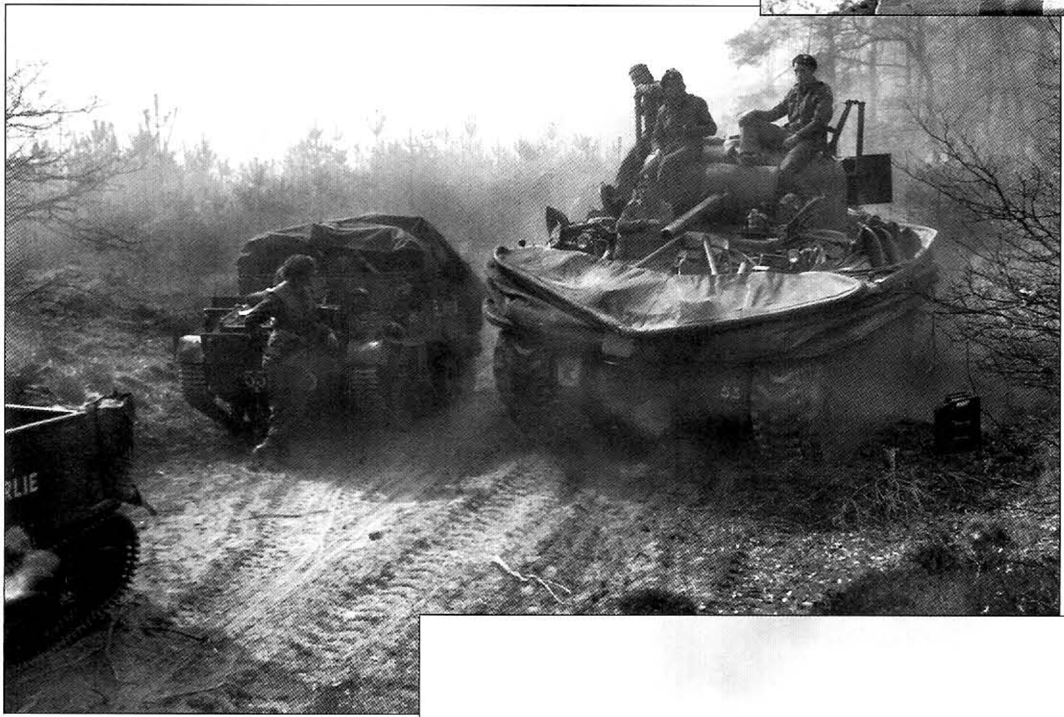
A Sherman IC Firefly and three Shermans of 8th Armoured Brigade move into Alpen. These tanks may belong to 13th/18th Royal Hussars who were transferred to 8th Armoured Brigade on 29 July 1944 when 27th Armoured Brigade was disbanded. 11 March 1945. (IWM B15535)



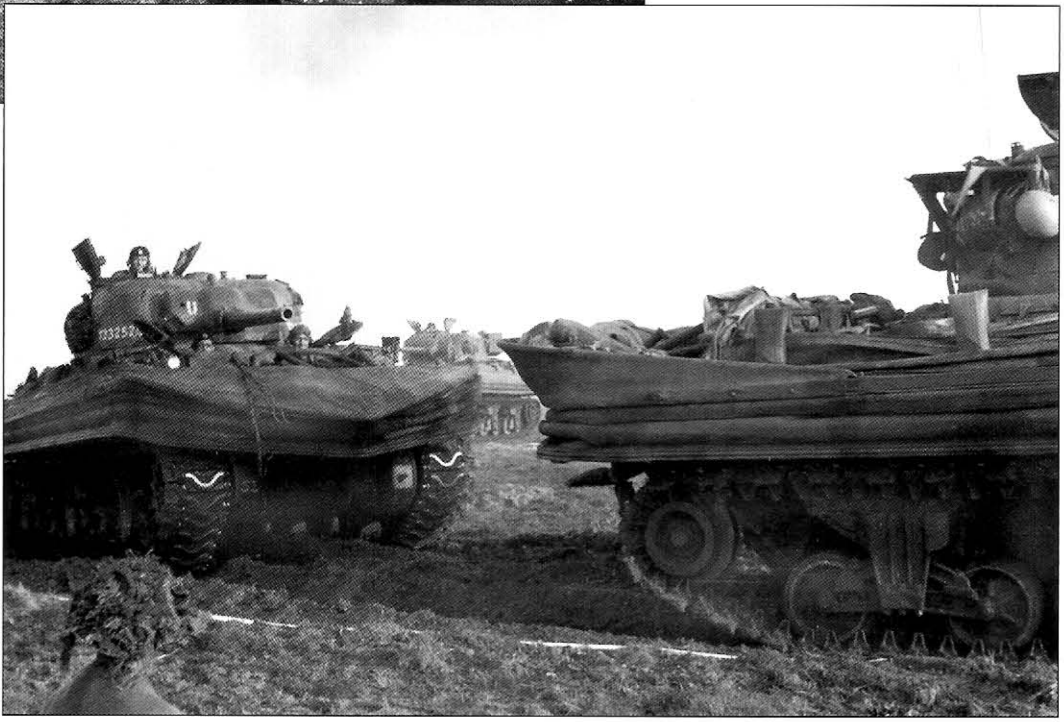
The same tank shown in the previous photo, viewed from the rear. 6 March 1945. (IWM B15230)

The crew of a Sherman tank of 8th Armoured Brigade loading ammunition near Xanten. The cap badge and white/dark blue regimental arm flash of 13th/18th Royal Hussars are plainly visible being worn by the man holding the shell and the Sergeant standing behind him. 21 March 1945. (IWM BU1966)

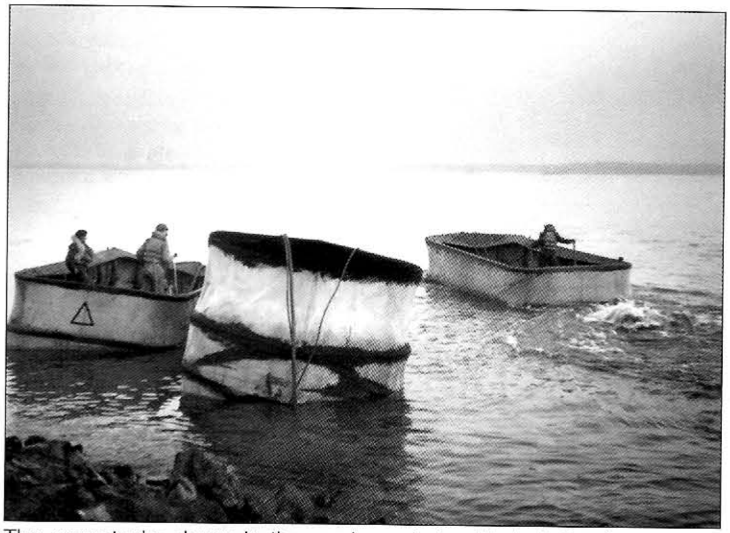




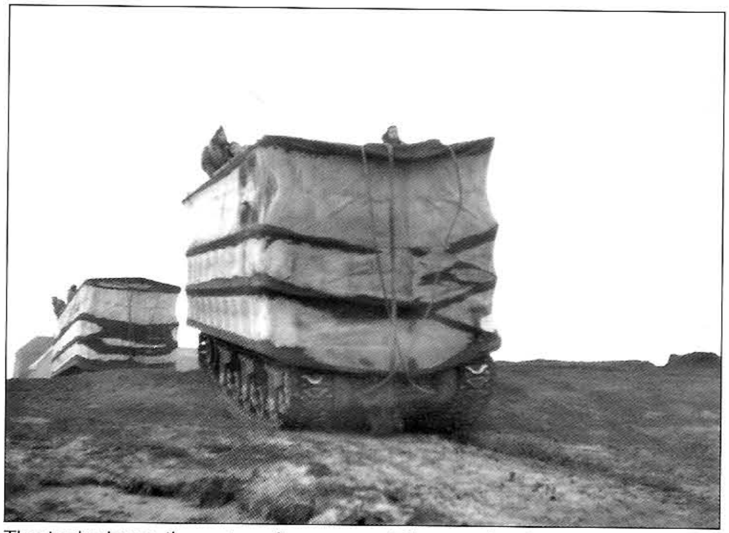
Sherman DD tank of 44th RTR, 4th Armoured Brigade, passing Carriers of the 6th King's Own Scottish Borderers east of the Rhine. The Black Jerboa formation badge and AoS sign can be seen under the folded flotation screen. 25 March 1945. (IWM BU2486)



More 44th RTR Sherman DD tanks move forward during the Rhine crossing. Interestingly the markings carried on the transmission cover are reversed to those shown in the previous photo. 24 March 1945. (IWM BU2148)

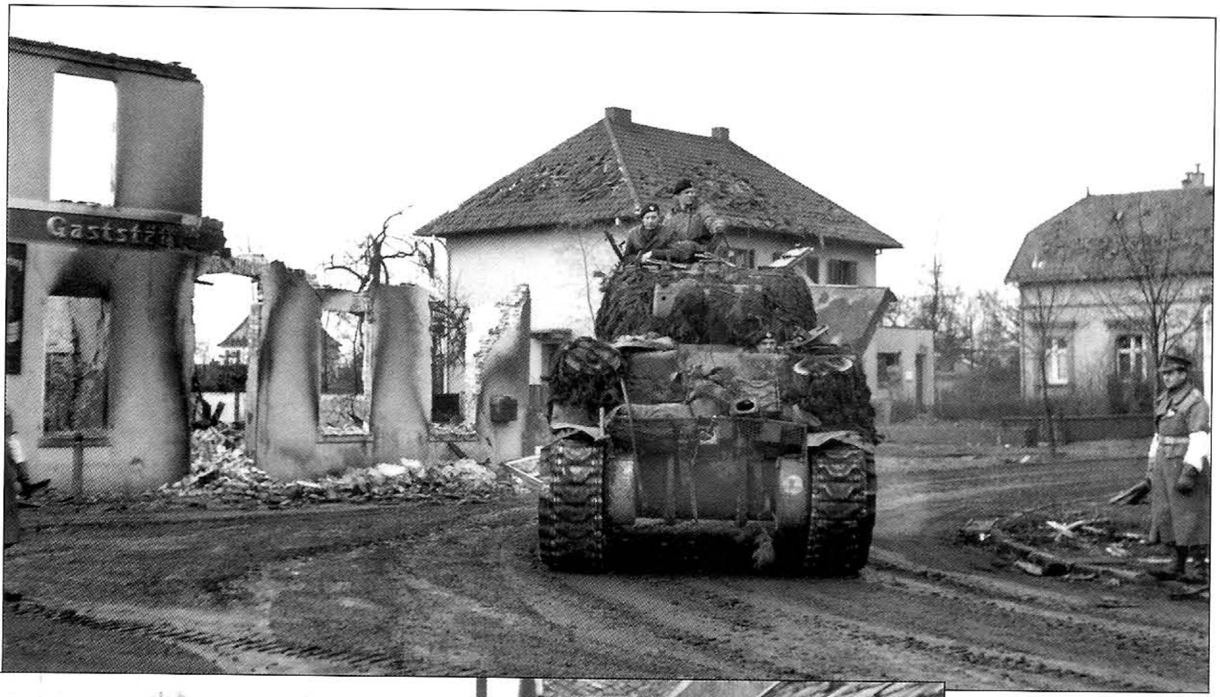


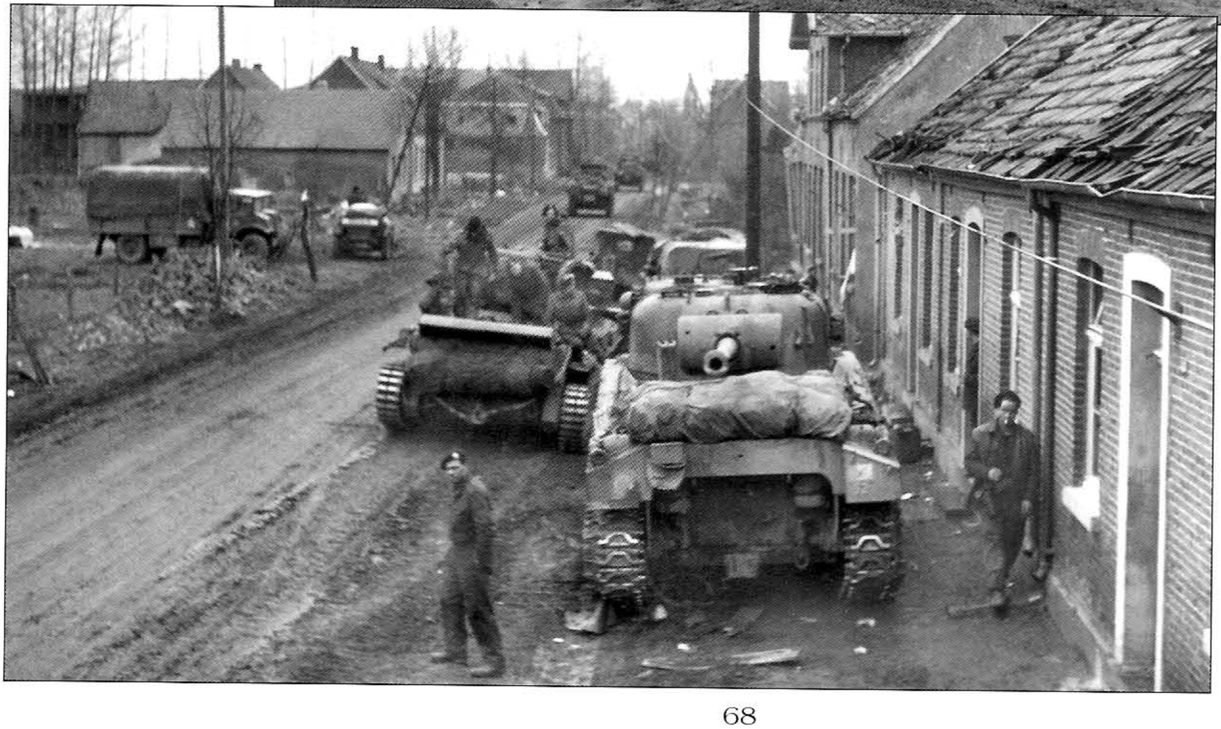
The same tanks shown in the previous photo with their flotation screens raised entering the river. Note the A Squadron marking on the rear of one of the screens. 24 March 1945. (IWM BU 2172)



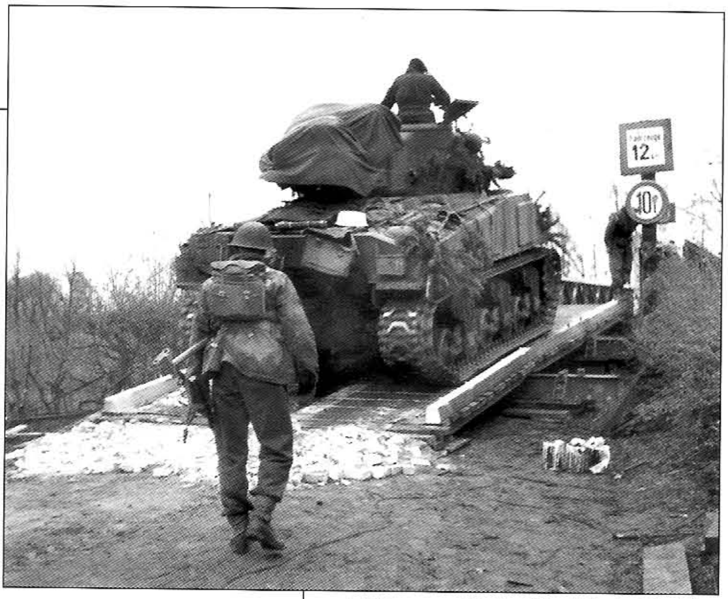
The tanks leave the water after successfully crossing the river. The patchy appearance of the screens is due to they're having been painted in the lowered position. 24 March 1945. (IWM BU2173)

A Sherman Firefly of 5th RTR, 7th Armoured Division advances through the ruins of Borken, Germany. In late July 1944 5th Royal Inniskilling Dragoon Guards replaced 4th County of London Yeomanry in 22nd Armoured Brigade necessitating a rearrangement in the seniority of the regiments – hence 5th RTR here bears the AoS sign of white 53. Tanks of the brigade are shown and discussed further in the illustrations. 30 March 1945. (IWM BU2829)

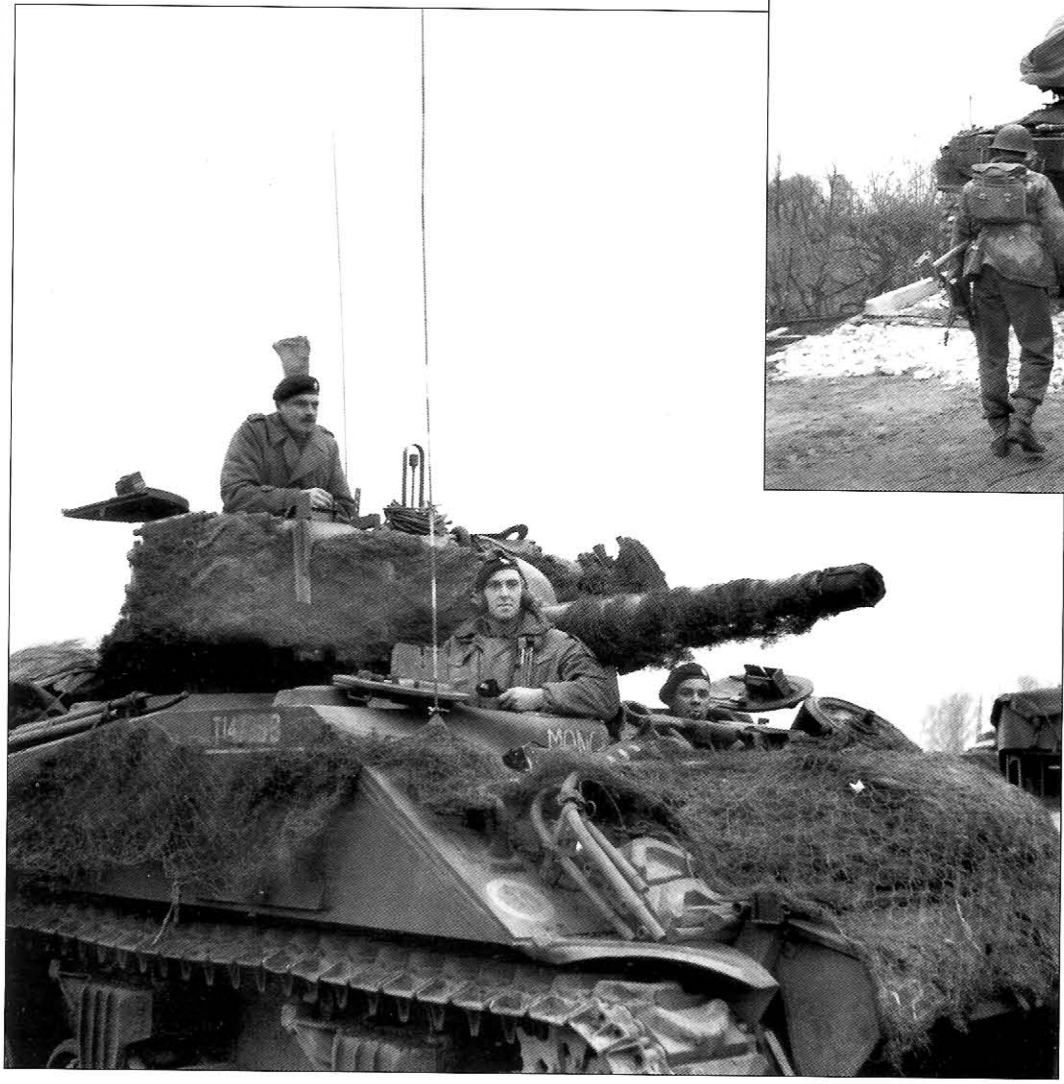




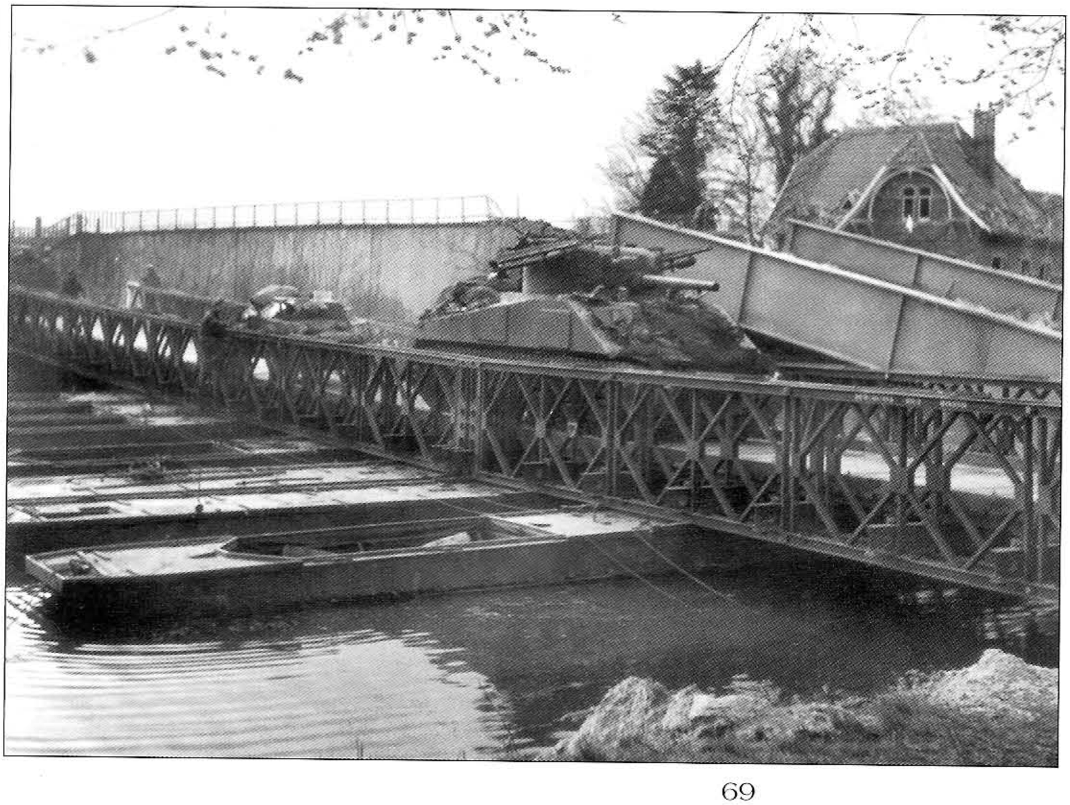
Sherman Firefly and other vehicles of 1st RTR, 7th Armoured Division in Ahaus. This tank is shown and discussed further in the illustrations. 1 April 1945. (IWM BU3135)



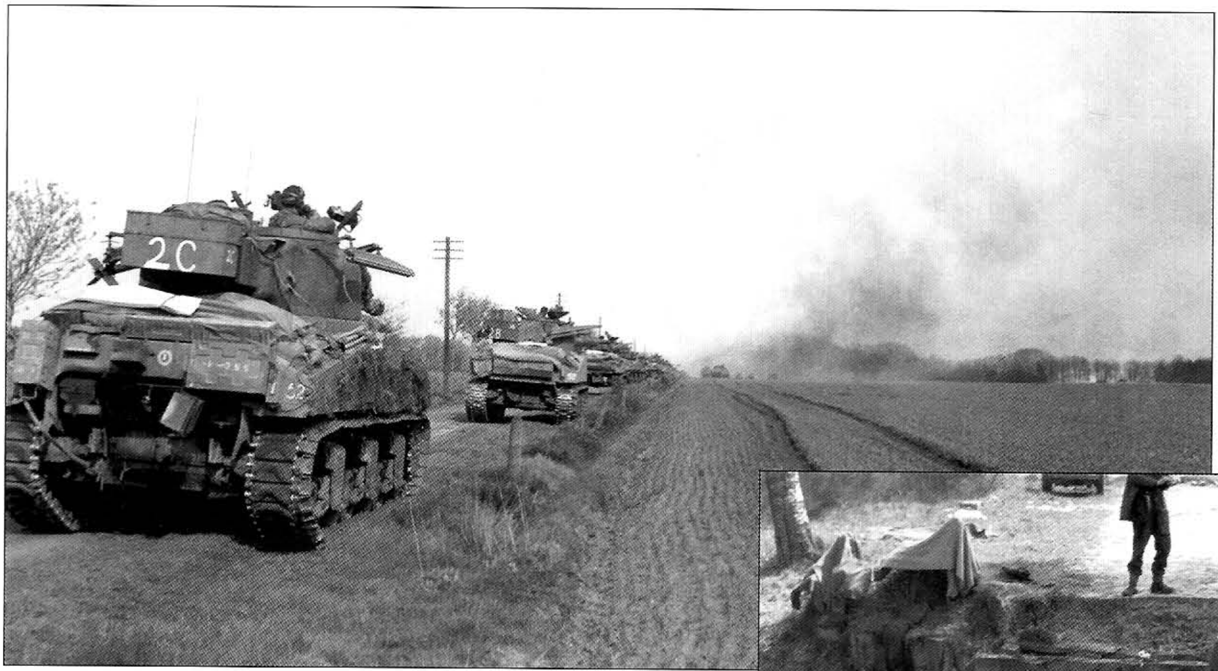
A Sherman Firefly IC attributed to The Royal Scots Greys crossing the Dortmund-Ems Canal. 4 April 1945. (IWM BU3141)



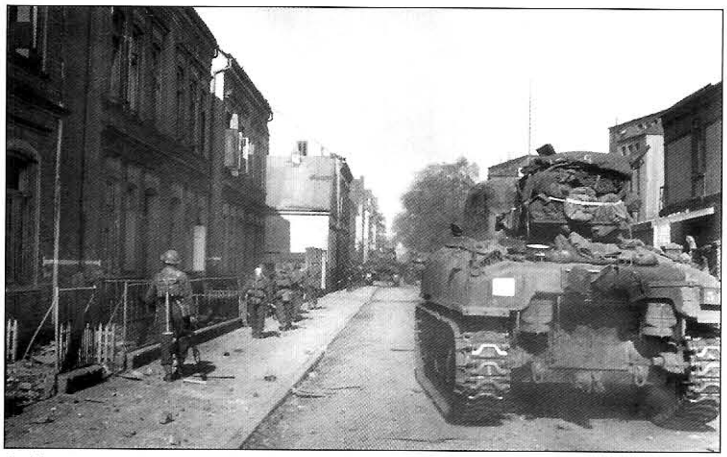
The command tank of Lt-Col R F S Gooch, CO of 1st Coldstream Guards, a Sherman I. Within the RHQ tanks were named after former Colonels of the regiment, the name MONCK, being painted here in front of the lap gunner's hatch. Festooned with gear, the only other markings visible are the WD number, T 147399, on a dark background and a bridge classification just above the mudguard. 1 April 1945. (IWM BU3128)



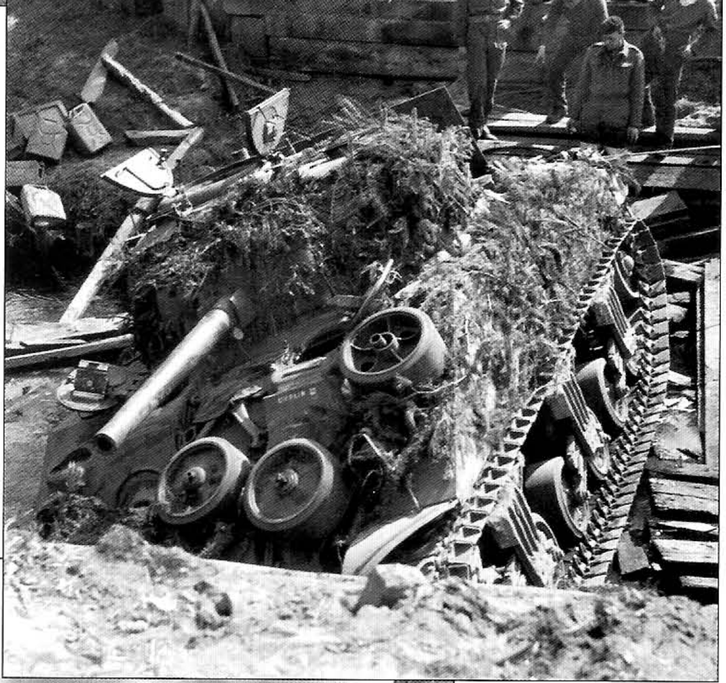
Sherman tank of the 1st Coldstream Guards crossing a pontoon bridge over the Dortmund-Ems Canal. In early 1945 tanks of this regiment were fitted with 60lb SAP aircraft rockets and the rails used to fire them. Both the rails and rockets were the same as those used on aircraft and were fired electrically by means of a wire leading into the cupola. The regiment was quite enthusiastic over the rocket's performance, particularly the psychological effect it was believed to have on the enemy but also it destructive power which was likened to that of a medium artillery shell. The Ministry of Supply doubted their value and the idea did not progress beyond this stage. 6 April 1945. (IWM BU3158)



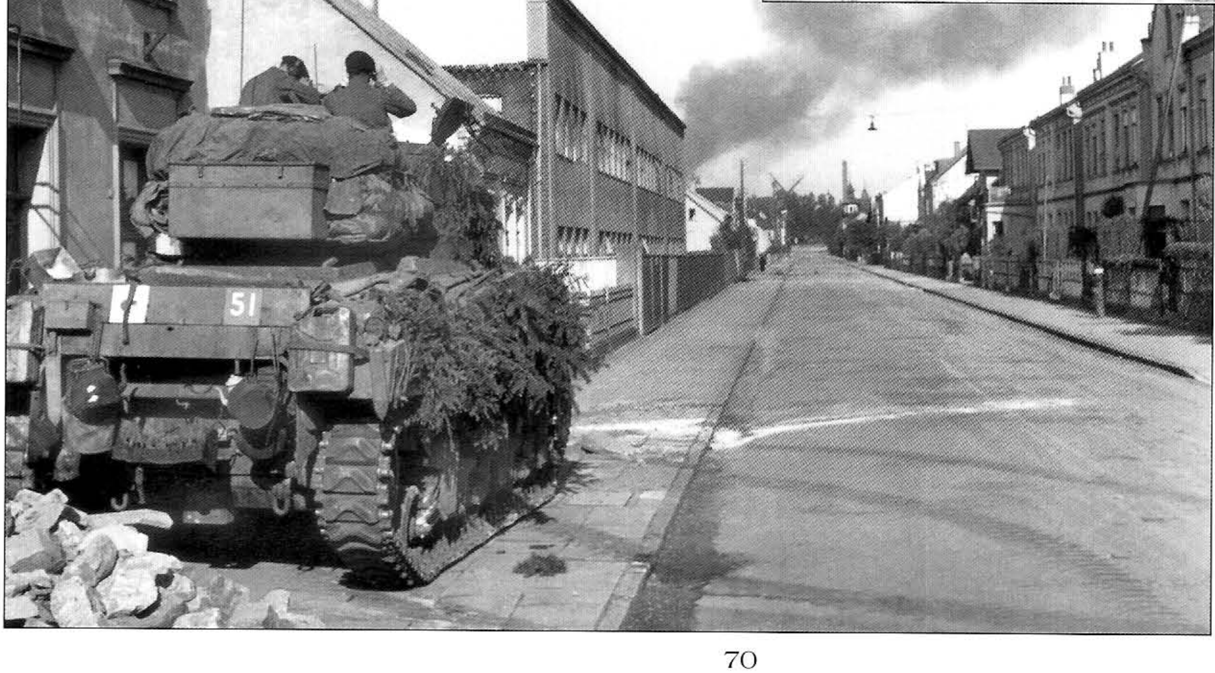
A Sherman Firefly and 75mm armed tanks of the 1st Coldstream Guards, Guards Armoured Division during the advance into Germany. The lead tanks are firing directly into German positions in the wood in the center of the photo. These tanks and the arrangement of the SAP rockets are shown and described further in the illustrations. 13 April 1945. (IWM BU3584)



A Sherman II, probably of the Royal Scots Greys, 4th Armoured Brigade moves into Bremen. 22 April 1945. (IWM BU4305)

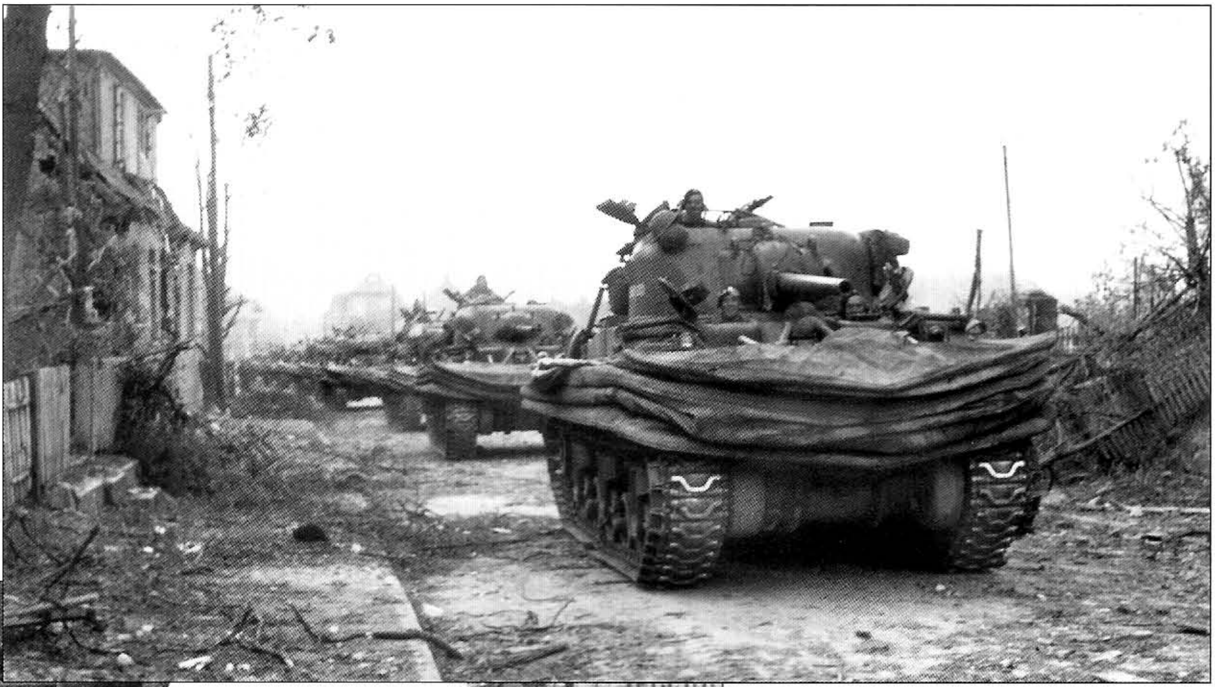


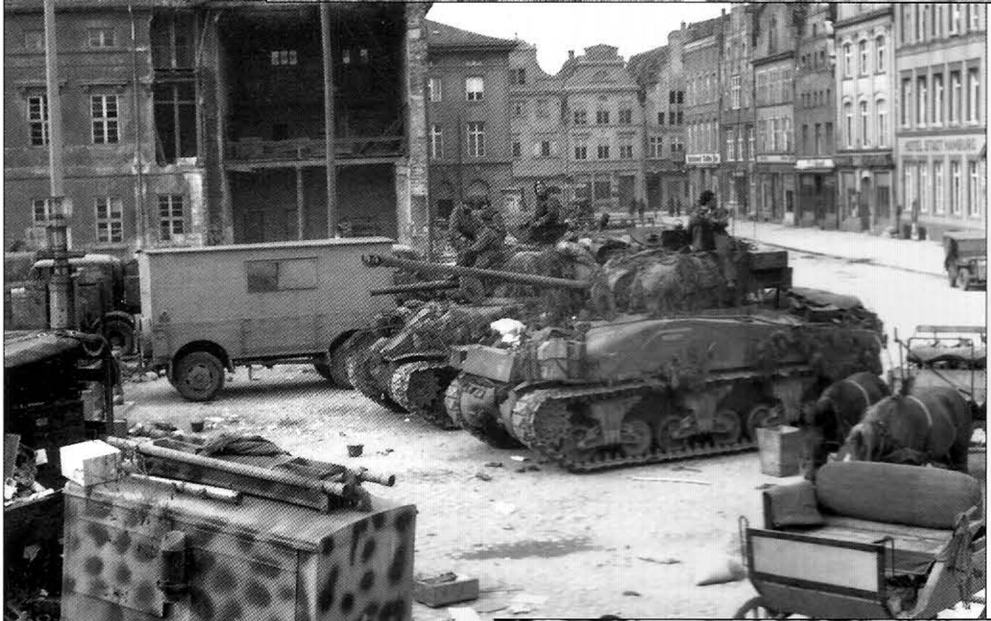
A Sherman of the 2nd Irish Guards, DUBLIN III, after collapsing a bridge on a road leading to the Bremen-Hamburg autobahn. 20 April 1945. (IWM BU4161)



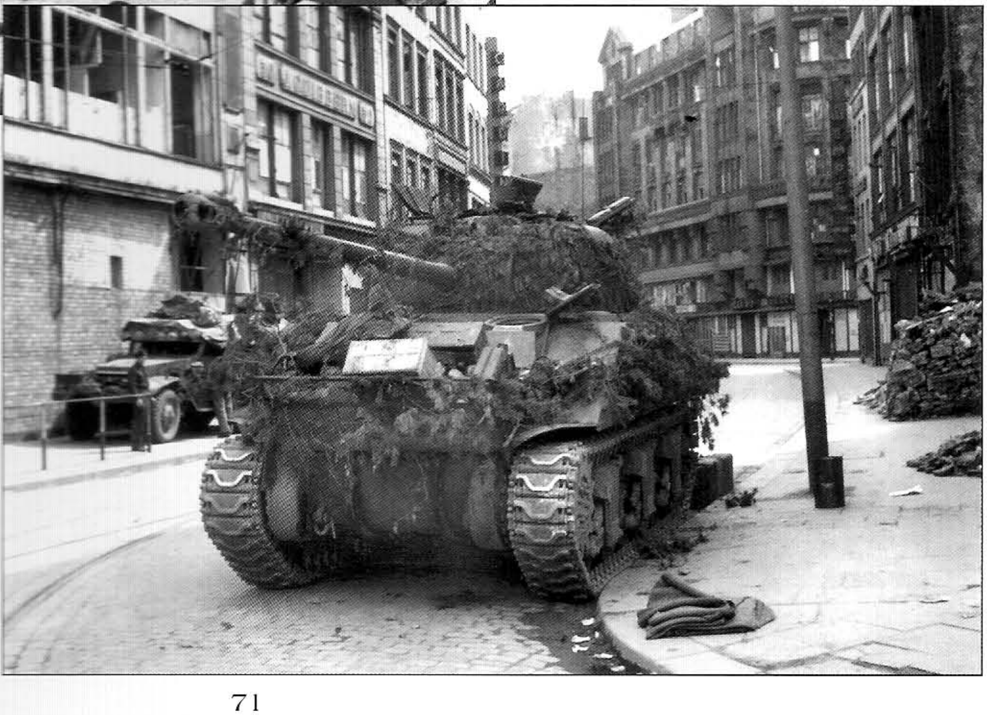
A Sherman I Firefly of The Royal Scots Greys, 4th Armoured Brigade in Bremen. The complicated system of AoS signs used for the various armored brigades seem to have been discontinued in favor of the number sequence used by the brigades attached to divisions. 25 April 1945. (IWM BU4302)

Sherman DD tanks with lowered flotation screens in Lauenburg, Germany. 29 April 1945. (IWM BU4795)

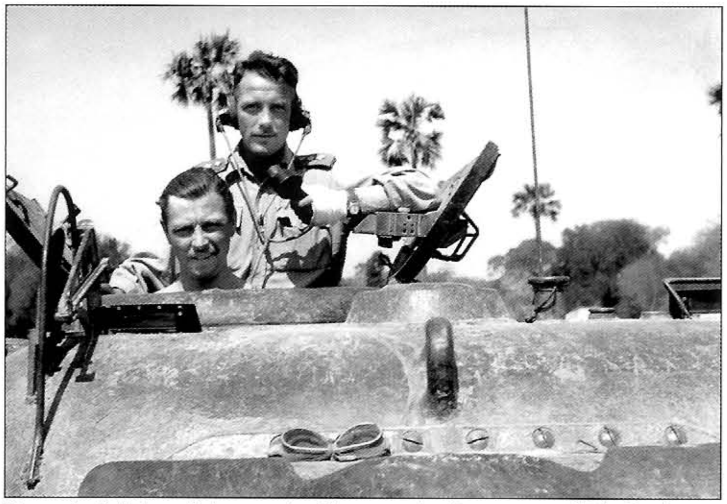




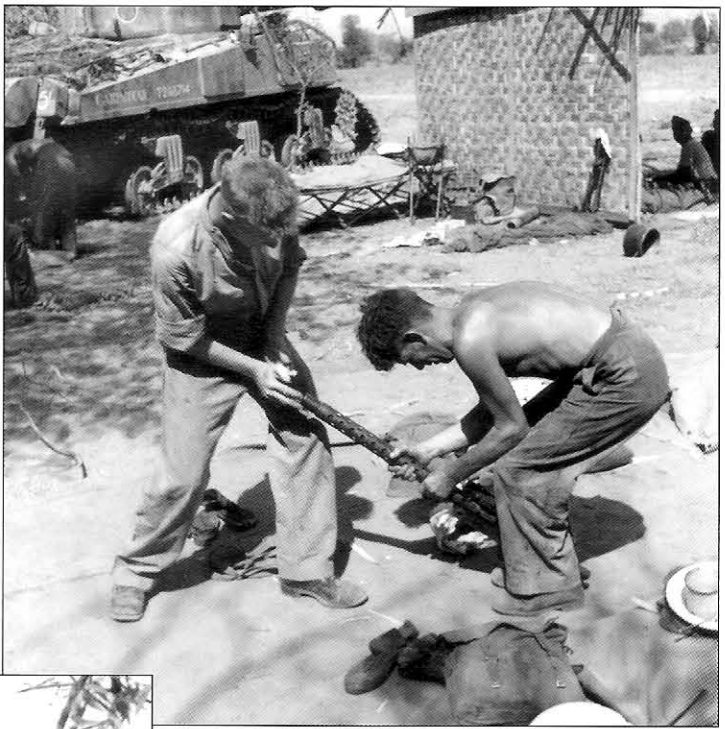
Sherman tanks of The Royal Scots Greys, 4th Armoured Brigade surrounded by abandoned German transport in Wismar. The nearest tank, a Sherman Hybrid IC Firefly, has the name PRIORITY painted in white on the hull appliqué armor. Just visible are the remnants of the light counter-shading applied to the 17pdr barrel. 4 May 1945. (IWM BU5308)



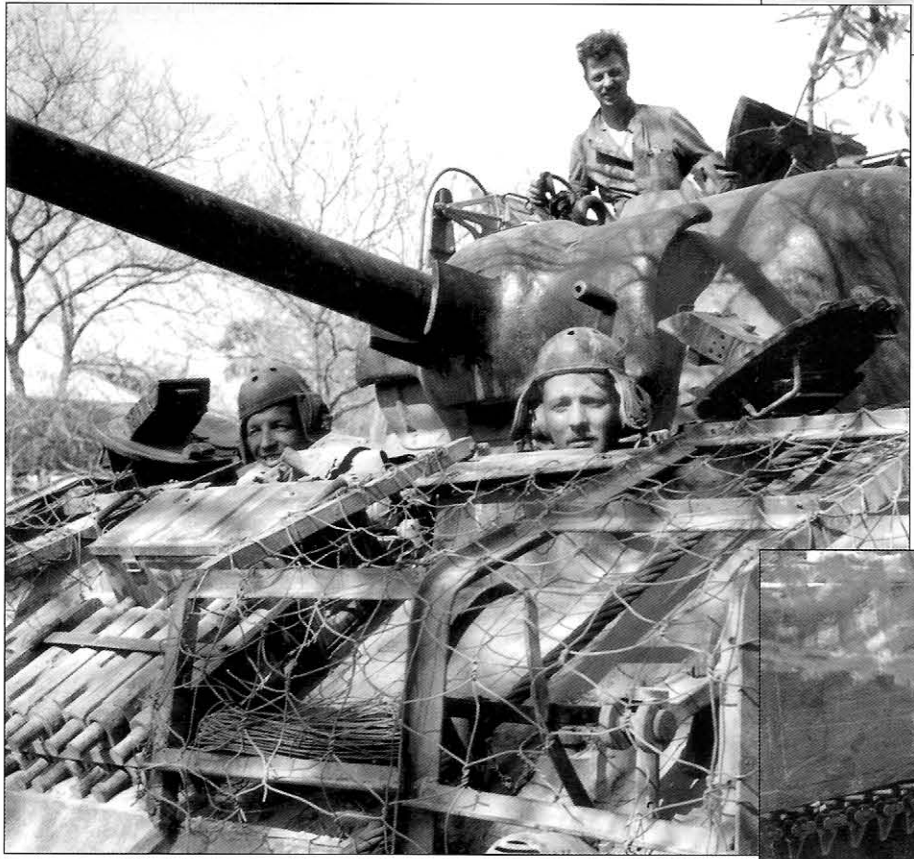
Looking decidedly out of place this Sherman Firefly of 7th Armoured Division sits parked in a Hamburg street. 4 May 1945. (IWM BU5255)



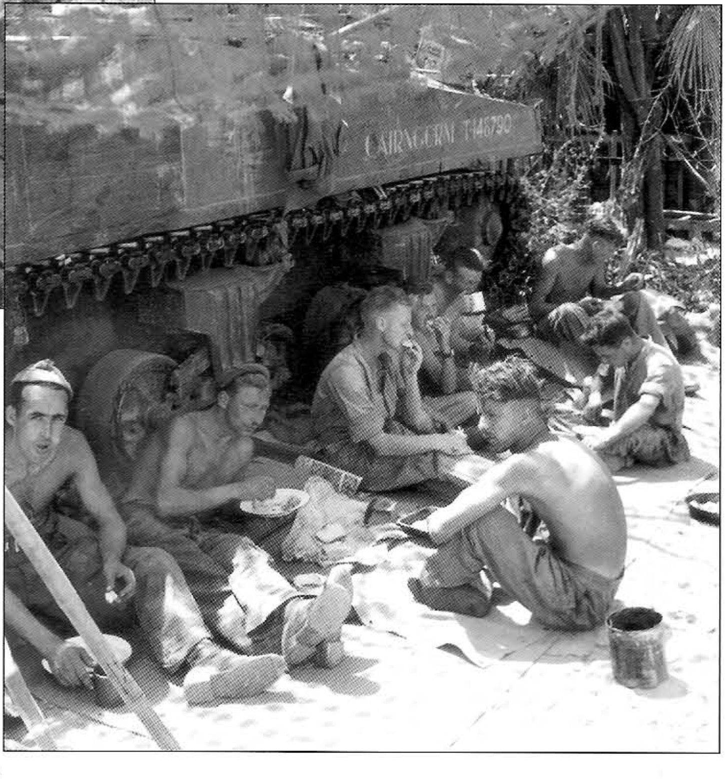
The only British unit to operate Shermans in Burma was 116th Regiment, RAC raised by converting 9th Battalion, The Gordon Highlanders. The regiment was attached to 255th Indian Tank Brigade. Here Captain Weir and Corporal Picken are shown in the turret of their Sherman V, CAIRNGORM, of C Squadron. The exact purpose of the unusual sight arrangement is not known. 15 March 1945. (IWM SE3512)



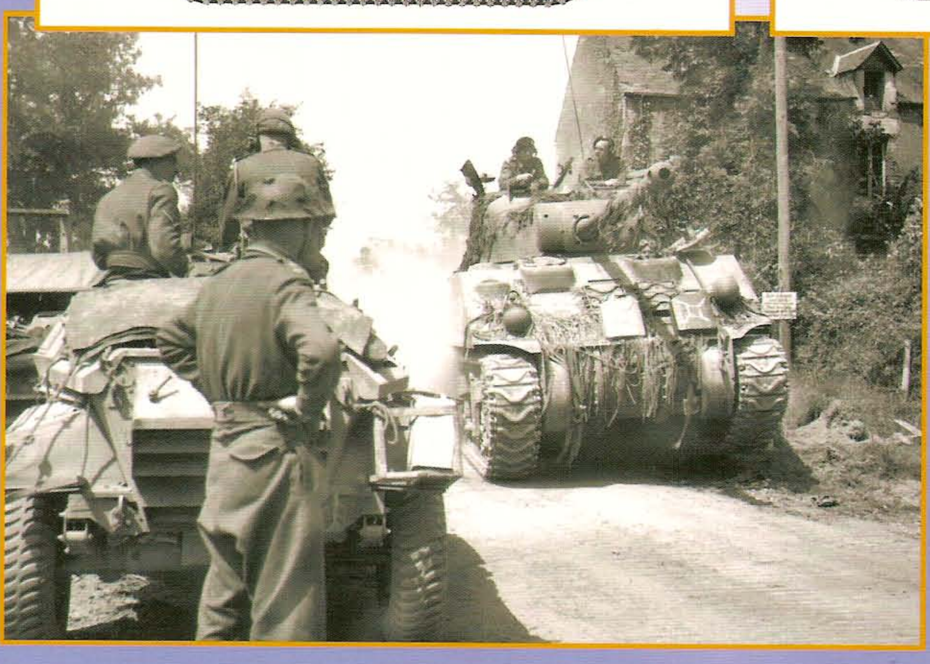
Two crew members of CAIRNTCUL, another of 116th RAC's Shermans, clean one of the tank's .30cal Browning machineguns. The C Squadron circle can clearly be seen on the turret just above the lifting hook. An AoS sign, of a white 51 outlined in a dark color on what is definitely a dark over light square, has been painted onto a box attached to the rear of the hull. 15 March 1945. (IWM SE3510)



In common with other tanks of 255th Brigade CAIRNGORM had metal rack with wire covering welded to the hull front in an effort to combat the use of sticky bombs. This was the only theater where the US Army tank helmet was widely worn. 15 March 1945. (IWM SE3515)



The crew of CAIRNGORM eat a meal in the shade of a camouflage net. The tanks name and WD number, T-148790, can be seen in this view. 15 March 1945. (IWM SE3518)



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